

# THE GRAND TOUR

ROMER WILSON



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**THE GRAND TOUR**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MARTIN SCHULER

IF ALL THESE YOUNG MEN


# THE GRAND TOUR

BY  
ROMER WILSON

AUTHOR OF "MARTIN SCHULER"

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TO  
MARGUERITE JOSEPHINE MARIE FLEURY  
AND  
JEAN EDOUARD GIRRARD  
I DEDICATE THESE TRIFLES

A. M.





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# THE GRAND TOUR

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*December 1, 1921*

**I** MAKE a terrible confession, Girrard. My art is insufficient to me.

After summing up existence in a block of sculptured marble, there is still so much left over, so much I have been obliged to discard, to knock off life as I make the chips fly in an effort to obtain from mere stone a residuum that shall be pure fact unclouded with ambiguities and muddle-mindedness, that I am left with a regret similar to that of a hero who, in order to obtain his goal, must neglect, even destroy, a thousand wonderful and interesting objects.

There is my excuse for this incursion into your province, formulated, like most excuses, after the event.

The fact is that a year last November, without intention to produce a masterpiece in a line of business not my own, I began to play with the inkpot. I have no doubt Michelangelo secretly admired his sonnets more than his Sistine. I certainly thought my first stilted story unique and beautiful. The next day, half shy of my brave nonsense, I tore it up, and immediately began another, full of creatures neither fleshly nor divine, clouds that dispersed on the second page. Then Prudhom came to see me. The glamour of that visit inspired me, and he became the hero of the first of these tales. Since when, although the

Muse has turned her limelight only upon my friends, myself, the house next door, I have been absent on a grand tour in a strange country.

Girard, you old buck, I am glad to be alive. You dress yourself up in fun as Heracles, and attempt to cleanse the stables of literature, but I believe you are a Comic at heart. Though superficially I also am a Comic, I think I am made of very tragic stuff. I have wept numberless tears on this voyage, and, on those few occasions when I saw the thinness of our human masks, was fearfully afraid.

I have saved your face—you are not herein presented in the flesh ; though I have indicted certain letters to you, you remain without this sphere, Zeus, whom I apostrophize, Zeus remote on your Olympus. I prayed to you in absence.

Excellent Zeus ! Slay me with thunder and lightning for an unskilled impostor, but admit that I have read a word or two in the Inestimably Immense Compendium of Man's Foolishness.

*December 1, 1921*

#### APOLOGY

Shy Goddess ! You have almost entirely escaped these pages, to which I intended you should give grace with your presence ; your image has refused to be evoked in public worship. I admire your good sense, Marguerite, and apologize, not for my Muse that she seems to have ignored my wishes and connived at your refusal, but for myself that I ever had the crude desire of Ahasuerus to exhibit my crown of love.

The truth is that I could not write of you, since in absence I forget you, and retain but a vague dream of you, as indefinite as the memory of bright, early

morning, a diffusion of grace and clear bright pleasure. You exist in life, you belong to reality ; therefore, shall I be ashamed to own that when you have gone from me, no more than a lovely ghost of you haunts my memory ?

I admit that woman is something strange and foreign to me, a divine surprise from which I have never recovered. Does this being actually inhabit this world ? Then the Basilisk, the Phoenix, Unicorn, Loup-garou, Centaur, Mermaid, dwell also hereabouts. It would astonish you how frequently my conduct is guided by archaic taboo, and what strange ideas I have in the presence of women.

Why ! if I buy a newspaper from an old woman in a kiosk, I see not only the old woman and the kiosk but feel how fitting it is that she should be shut up in it. I think her kiosk hangs between heaven and earth, as if in a Slav fairy tale, and that she sells me news of the world for a penny, and that she is an old mother who knows too much about the other side of the moon. Would you believe that I never take change from these old women if I can possibly avoid it ?

If I made public a half of my feelings towards women I should be called Barbarian, Turk, Beast, Reactionary, Sentimentalist ; I should be styled Pasha and Romanticist, and relegated to the Age of Crinolines and Whiskers ; since I have no time, therefore, to make plain the whole of my attitude towards a sex that I admire and respect, I had better keep silent. But for all that I cannot resist one cut at my present *Bête noire*, one cut and no more, or I shall become like a school edition of the Classics, all foolish foreword and no text.

I hate Modern Education, not because it instructs your sex, Marguerite, in history and mathematics, but



because at heart it despises you. We shall Ennoble Frail Woman! That idea is in the heart of every educationist. Bah! Ennoble the trees with the Multiplication Table!

My fair enemy, the Multiplication Table is at your service, together with all Histories, Sciences, Languages, Stars, Suns, Sackbuts, Cymbals, Gramophones, Gyroscopes, Railways, Rouge Pots, Costumes, Cinemas, Crèmes de Menthes, Mountains, miseries and joys in creation, as are also these stories.

And here again I apologize to you, Marguerite, and to all women, on behalf of all civilization, that these affairs are not invariably of first-rate or even passable quality.

*November 2, 1920*

#### TWO WOMEN

Marguerite, you remember Lucien Prudhom? He came in last night and sat down in my study as if he had the right to do so, as if the divan near the fire was reserved for his use. I had not seen him for two years, since the day he went away to Africa for the seventh time in the interests of science.

The lamp was lit and cast the shadow of his profile upon the white marble base of my "Statue of a Woman." There is something to be said for silhouette portraits, they are uncompromising, severe, and give an insight into a man's secret character, the one with which he was born. Prudhom is not his own master, he does not know where his strength lies, he fears to fall down the hidden crevasses of his own character, he has not the power to transmute his soul to gold. The set of his mouth and chin are too determined for a secure man. He lives by force of will and crushes obstacles in his path; but he cannot



adjust his will to any other action than those of going ahead and crushing. No doubt he is very happy forcing his way through virgin forests, across torrents, up and down tremendous mountains. He has no chance of meeting subtle, uncrushable human beings in Central Africa. He is no fool, but he is not aware of himself, and those people which send sounds echoing through his dark places mystify him, and he runs away from them.

I was glad to see him again. I knew that he could put the whole of Africa at my feet, and in five or six sentences refresh my rather hazy memory of a place that I had never visited. Above him stood my "Statue of a Woman" as aware of herself as it is possible to be. Her whole compact small body, strong and handsome as a well-built animal's, knew that she was herself. Her muscles were in perfect sympathy with her mind, her mind in accordance with everything simple and normal. "She knows no law but the law of averages," Jerome Weber always says. He calls her "My Girl", slaps her familiarly, and upbraids me that I have not gone a step further and made her breathe. She looked down now at Prudhom as if she would like to meet him in contest, force him to subdue her, and thus gain complete ascendancy over him. He also is a fine physical animal, and at forty-two, in perfect mature condition. I am afraid that she would always remain beyond him, outside his mental grasp, and thus always remain his slave. But what a woman for a man her equal! She is without cunning, without coquetry, without false shame; she knows the ancient significance of honour and pride, fears nothing either in word or deed, and admits no limitations to experience except the limitation of excess. I love her. I made her. She is gay, charming, imperious, submissive, rigid, yielding, in

due proportion, and if a man is honest will take him, with his faults, good-humouredly, as an honest woman should. I have never known her preach, but I have seen her smile at what she calls "their simplicity." She is smaller than I am. I hate colossal women. She is not a virgin, she knows everything, and is as clean and innocent as knowledge can make her. There, Marguerite, I am only thirty, but I am the father of a mature and sensible woman.

Last night I wished I could have caused her to step down off her block of marble and stand in front of Prudhom. I did so in imagination. The clearness of this imaginary scene of encounter made me shudder. I shuddered within the limitations of my power like a huge ox bound with cords, like Samson in the chains of Philistia after Delilah had barbered off his curls. I saw before me what I could not actualize, and though seeing may be believing for hypnotists and philosophers, that kind of logic means nothing to me. I was annoyed with myself. At thirty it is ridiculous not to have captured every divine power. I was dissatisfied, and the memory of the past and the future shook me like corn in the south wind.

Prudhom began telling me his adventures in the Nile Basin and my annoyance passed. I saw the whole of Egypt from Alexandria to the Soudan. Soudan! What a name! Who first spoke it? Some day I shall take a woman into my arms and whisper passionately into her ear "Soudan!" and she and I will be transported into the mysterious southern night. The flippant, raucous passions of youth will fall from us; undisciplined romance, voluptuous abandonment, those harpies in the rig of Venus, will fly back to their satin eeries and electric illuminations, leaving us alone together in that old dry country, under those old dark heavens, with the simple antiquity of our

love, paradoxically one with the whole of humanity and the only representatives of the human race.

It was well for me that at this moment Prudhom took me to the Assouan Dam. I heard the water roaring through the culverts, and saw the immense Nile pour out below my feet like a sea pouring into the arena of the world. The force, the sheer weight of that force, roused the power of contest within me. I swore, My work must have this quality; I will at least keep company with the Assouan Dam. I looked up at my statue. She had lost nothing.

Something came over me, a reckless desire to give this man at least as much as Africa had offered him, mixed with a comic wish to put him to shame, to see what sort of a coward he was. I said:

"Lucien, I will give you that statue behind you."

Marguerite, you remember a certain day we spent at Meudon in October—a day between the two first frosts of Autumn? Yellow and russet trees stood about us like a fairy palace, the sun shone in a transparent blue sky, the air was filled with the sweet, natural smell of wood and leaves. You said to me:

"I would like to give you all that I have and am."

I felt very humble, very tender, and very proud; for up to that moment, though we had been lovers for some time, you had only made what is foolishly called the "supreme surrender." That exquisite gift which no man can ask of any woman, and no man refuse if he be worth the clay he is made of, you had not offered me.

I asked, because we like to be foolish and discuss the obvious:

"Why this?"

You answered me:

"I cannot help myself; I feel your indestructible superiority."

"Well," I said, smiling, "I am a man and I love you honestly. I think those are the only reasons. But before I take you I must ask the price."

You laughed, and of course replied, "Nothing"—the only possible answer between equals.

Now I will tell you the truth: you succeeded in frightening me. I was a little aghast, as if I had got a precious piece I had long desired knocked down to me at an auction. You know the feeling, "How the deuce am I to take it home? Everybody will focus their covetousness upon me. In the first place, the taxi-driver will convey me out to St. Cloud, shoot me and throw my body into a sandpit, in order to gain possession of this thing." I felt that Fate and Life would be unkind to me on your account if I took you out of their hands into my own. I could not, of course, refuse you. I pretended that I had absolute courage. I could not play the traitor and insult you in a betrayal of flight, especially as during those previous months I had been in half-conscious expectation of this moment.

You thought yourself very humble before your newly acquired master; but you could not have been more humble than I, nor could you know the completeness of my surrender to you, nor the degree of service you put upon me! Or perhaps you did know because you are omniscient. I think I saved your honour, I think I took on my new dignity with sufficient outward assurance; but the seismograph of my spirits recorded an earthquake.

At last my courage is regulated, my possession of you is become a matter of fact, as ordinary, as wonderful as the daylight.

To return, I wished to see what sort of a coward Lucien was, or how deep his sensibilities went. I reiterated:



"Lucien, I want to give you that woman of mine. When you go, take her home in a taxi. I think we can carry her between us."

He stood up and faced her. His hands went up in despair.

"My God!" he cried, "how awful!"

"You don't like her?" I asked.

"The responsibility," he ejaculated. "No! No! No! Impossible!"

I smiled and called him a coward.

"Yes," he answered, "it is just that; I haven't the courage."

I heard a tone in his voice, however, which told me he suddenly desired her.

"Why are you afraid?" I asked.

"My dear Alphonse," he said, "in the first place every one will know that Alphonse Marichaud has given Lucien Prudhom, his chef d'œuvre, and my room will become a musée des Beaux Arts. In the second place, I shall no longer be master in my own home. I shall be in the wretched position of a favourite of Katherine the Great, the minion of an Olympian. My friends will cease to listen to me in her presence, I shall have to decorate the walls of my house to suit her, exile my assegais and tom-toms, surrender my one large room to her sole use. My litter of papers and sacred objects of horror would disgust her; it is different here: she was born amongst your rubbish. No, no, don't be offended, my boy, I haven't the stomach for it. If you must get rid of her, present her to the nation, set her to reign over the Luxembourg."

"She likes individual admiration," I answered.

"You are a terrible man, Alphonse," he continued. "You had no right to create her in your youth; she is too mature not to make you, as her father, appear

indecent. Where is the healthy exaggeration of inexperience, where those faults of construction to command our sympathy, where that looseness of conception which time will remove from your later work? You have said the last word in female creation and made us all disgusted with the women we know. 'Bah! your shoulders are not firm like la Marichaud's,' we think, or 'You do not know the meaning of poise.' Damnation, she will haunt me! I am afraid of her. If you force her upon me I should become absurd in an attempt not to fail either physically, morally, or intellectually before her. I am really only fit to dominate a millinery assistant."

"She is quite human," I said. "She can laugh, she can tolerate, she can forgive, she will be slow to despise."

"I know, I know!" he cried; "but she possesses a criterion against which she will measure me. At forty-two it is rather late to undergo a complete reformation. Come, don't say anything more on the subject; I want to remain comfortably second-rate. I won't have her."

He turned away and lit a cigarette.

Why does he turn away? I thought. Perhaps he is tempted to strike his match on her smooth white limbs. I saw by the hurried glance he gave her that he had been.

"Pi-u! Pi-u! Pi-u!" he whistled. "Owner of Marichaud's woman! I should burst with pride. Ah! Marichaud's woman! I should be more august than the President of the Academy."

"Lucien," I said, "you make me feel an ugly and repulsive character. I think of myself as someone modest, human, and kind, fond of flowers, birds, wet and fine days, wine and music, on good terms with life as it is, in love with merely being alive."



"You mistake yourself," he cried; "your sanity is brutal, your freedom from illusion bare and uncomfortable, your personality to the ordinary mind ugly, like your face. Your normality is awkward in this world, like a block of granite placed as an obstruction in the Rue de Rivoli. We do not want your type in modern civilization. Wait until we have passed away; for God's sake die for a thousand years, and wake when humanity is able to accommodate you!" He fixed me with his eyes as if he were subduing a cannibal monarch. "What I hate most about you," he said, "is your indifference to your position, your pretence that you are no better than we are, that if we don't possess your power and genius it is the result of idleness, not of inability. We feel all the more unable because you will not believe in our incapacity. We have to put you hors concours simply in order not to shoot ourselves."

I laughed. Lucien's outburst naturally flattered my vanity. I felt, what this man says is true; and in a manner it is, yet I am not at all after that fashion. I said:

"I am quite sincere. I am not conscious of superiority. I live against sane fear, rational depression, common feelings of impotence."

"My dear fellow," he replied, sitting down again, "how can I believe that? You have reached the climax in your work at least four times in the last six years. That is excessive. Who inspires you? What series of life's prima donnas, what procession of mortal heroes have begotten your ideas? Who showed you the first glimpse of 'The Calm Young Man', who drew the curtain of oblivion aside from 'Echo d'un Hero.' Take me into your studio. I want to see your work in hand. I want to frighten myself again with your intellect. By the way, I heard you

had sold ' *Il faut que je Danse* '. That and ' *Me Voici* ' were my favourites."

" They are both sold," I said, and rose as he rose.

I am not particularly fond of taking anybody into my workshop. I dislike my creatures to be seen half-made, before they have grown out of their weaknesses, before the secret of their strength is decently covered. I would as soon care to be seen myself flayed and disembowelled upon the anatomical table. To-night, however, I was complacent.

We entered the studio. The moon shone through the glass roof upon its white population, and Prudhom shivered as if he were entering an abode of ghosts. I did not turn on the electric light, for the moonlight made my figures as living as those first dreams I had of them before their creation.

Do you remember that night we went in there together about three weeks ago, Marguerite? The sky overhead was bright with stars, my marble and clay folk stood as still as death in a dark valley, and you were not in the least afraid.

Suddenly you put your hands upon me and asked : " Do I love you too much ? " as if it were a thing you frequently wondered when you were away from me. I kissed you and said nothing, because I felt magnificent, there in the presence of my magnificence, which is only that of the human race. You smiled as if you were suddenly reassured. What is this love to excess? You show it, discreetly, quietly, gently. You force nothing upon me, offer me everything, let me pick and choose as little or as much of it as I want. Your heart overflows with kindness to me ; you think of me as something unique, precious, extraordinary. You call me tender names, you wait upon me, respect me, fill me with good feelings towards myself. You never doubt my confidence in you, never tire me with

demands for exhibition of my love towards you. You respond to my passion and accept my caresses as if they were divine gifts. You know when to rouse me, when to be cold, when to put aside your own desires. All this is very pleasant to a vain man, and you must ask a bear, not a human being, for an affirmative answer to your silly question: "Do I love you too much?" I like to hear you ask it. It implies such divinely foolish trust in my judgment. I know that if I said "yes" you would immediately try to love me less. What a god you make me, therefore what a god I am. Sometimes I wonder if you also are not more than human; and then I remember with delight, with pride, that we have quarrelled, that you can weep, that you do have the stomach-ache.

I am always thinking of you, Marguerite. I feel the touch of your hand, or your dress, I remember the colour of your skin, and am always constructing out of our love remarkable imaginary buildings, fountains, statues. I thought of you with such intensity as I entered the studio that I forgot Prudhom. When I came to myself again I heard him say:

"I have been alone in Africa. Overhead the moon shone, around me the long grass waved, in the distance Mount Ruwenzori glittered as cold as glass. The silence was eternal. I was back in the primaeval years. I never felt so much at home. Here with you, in Paris my native city, in the studio of a famous sculptor, I feel lonely, as lonely as you would imagine I had been out there."

"Can you explain it?" I asked. I knew myself that we have no closer companion than untouched nature.

"I understood all that country," he answered. "This is incomprehensible to me. I believe I am an animal without a mind. Here I am frightened of the

future. I don't want a future of this sort, a future of men like you, like your sculptures ; you are too clear-minded. You leave nothing to our sins. You neither hunt nor kill, you see no point in fatal quarrels with your neighbour. You don't resent circumstances or curse God. You are friendly with the fates and take what they offer you in good part. Here there is no contest, no conquest, all is won ! ”

He stared at the scene in the studio and threw up his hands.

“ No ! ” he cried, “ you won't see me again, Alphonse. I am going straight back to Africa. I'll tear off my robe of civilization and cast this city out of my heart. Bah ! This woven net they spread over you in the world ! I shall become entailed in it and begin to be an old man. I will go back to Africa, to my wives, children, slaves, cattle, and hunt for Enim Pasha's ivory. I'll continue my researches in poison, find the ‘ Unknown Leaf,’ and become an expert medicine-man. Better to shoot hippopotami, to abduct pygmies in the interests of anthropology, than to live in Paris the slave of your ‘ Statue of a Woman ’, which I shall inevitably become if I remain here.”

“ Well, she is yours any time,” I said, and we went out of the studio. I had neither turned on the light nor taken my unfinished clays out of their swaddling clothes.

“ Don't say that,” he cried, “ or one night in the middle of Africa, when I am sorting my possessions round the camp-fire, I shall suddenly think of her, burn my priceless curios, and run here. I shall take her cold body in my arms, weep upon her marble breast, and swear never to leave her. Immediately I shall be torn to return to Africa, burn for the twilight of her forests, yearn for the strange passion of her storms, and become an insane man tormented by two



insatiable mistresses. In every sense you will tie a stone round my neck."

"Take her with you," I suggested. "Have your niggers carry her at the head of your cavalcade like a goddess."

"My dear man," he answered, "you do not know what you are saying. Heaven forgive you, the goddesses of Africa demand human sacrifices. Out there she would wield their power, and whose flesh but mine can you imagine would appease her?"

"The goddesses of Europe are no less cruel." I smiled.

"The thing is out of proportion," he exclaimed; and I understood what he meant, but in words it is impossible for me rightly to convey it.

"Nothing but life appeases those demons," he muttered, and looked at his watch. "It is early yet," he said; "if you are in the humour I will tell you a story."

I was in the humour. Prudhom's story would certainly have fascination if it had no point. He sat down; I mixed him an absinth and myself a gin and vermouth, and threw myself down on the divan to listen. I know all travellers' tales, and, to begin with, banished scepticism from the room, and held out my hand for the inevitable charm, talisman, or bit of animal hide with which African stories begin.

"This tale," said Prudhom, ignoring my outstretched hand, "is about two women. You will say there are no women but blacks and Queens of Sheba between Timbuctoo and Bulawayo. The one are a degradation, the others a dream. Out there one sees differently: one forgets the formula of black and white, colour vanishes, these folk become real people. For me, yes, not for the man who leaves his heart at home. Am I degenerate? Am I mad? In Europe,

yes. In Europe glib formulæ skip across my brain, like antelopes along the horizon. I say 'Ah! he buried himself in Africa, the fool. He ruined his soul with negresses.' I say nothing of the sort in my heart, for my heart is sound and knows that out there I lead a real existence. I am a man of many wives, not a temporary sojourner with dusky favourites. I have paid for them in yards of red cloth and herds of cattle, or I have captured them in war.

"I live down in the country of the blessed, in the unknown haunts of Rā, Isis, and Isoris. I know the secrets of Sekmet, and have seen the arising of the hippopotamus goddess beyond the land of Ethiopia. There I dwell in happy oblivion until some Stanley comes to meddle with my private affairs, to snatch out of Paradise a man who is not lost. I went out there first under commission of the Upper Nile Navigation and Trading Company, with head offices at Marseilles and Paris. Beyond Khartoum one laughs at head offices, and only mentions one's commission when one wants to appear an ambassador. Beyond Khartoum I cease to be the man you see before you. I became Prudhim Pasha, with the courtesy title of White Prince. In those old days I had money, beads, and other gimcracks of the company, printed calico, and a hundred yards of scarlet cloth of my own which I cut up into bank-notes. I went out burdened with the whole paraphernalia of a tropical traveller, collapsible shipping, canned comestibles, tents, and rifles, to load upon the heads of a black retinue. Now I go out empty handed, for I have learnt to make Africa accept me among her children, to give me my share in her inheritance.

"Oh, wonderful country, beyond Sahara, behind the mountains of Abyssinia! Fruitful bride of the young Nile! You Europeans, you strive for his



haggard spouse of Egypt, his yellow necromantic witch-wife. I tread on her corpse and smile at the nations digging in her entrails for buried treasure, making her striking flesh manure for tobacco and cotton crops to produce gold. One day she will give a twitch and kick you all off into the sea. Beyond the Soudan a man can be king in his own right, the right of his eyes and hands. There each of us who pays homage to Nature can live, an only man. I have learnt a language like the language of the birds; I have learnt a life like the life of the wild elephants. I have suffered hardships, yes, but I have liked them: they were my hardships, not put upon me by another man. I have traced fear to her barren lair; she is a phantom of the eyes of children, a ghost-daughter of men. I am the lord of Nature. I order her as I desire, but if I disobey her rules I fall into the pit of my own foolishness. Upon the day I said, 'Kill me, I shall not weep over my own grave,' I conquered her. I have learnt humility and pride. Marcihaud! Marichaud! when we are dead the greatest disbeliever among us hopes to go to Paradise beyond the wood of Purgatory. I am there alive. The land that I have taken for my sojourning place is not in the world; its air is the air of heaven. To the west of it lies the forest—ah! do you with your thin woods know the meaning of that dark word?—I hear the voice of the wind upon it moving mysteriously before the storm and my heart leaps up. To the south of it rise up the cliffs of Nyanza and the Mountains of the Moon. The noise of the world echoes very faint against those mountains when the wind is in the north.

"Ah, sir! out there I am a virtuous man. I rule my wives and children justly in accordance with their unspoken laws. I am 'good medicine,' and can chant away the devils with the best of them. My followers

and companions trust me ; my honour is stainless. When I go away my carved and feathered ' spirit ', a creation of my own, rules my house. My curse is upon those who offend wantonly against me. The moon is my sentinel and tells me what passes in my absence. I understand ' divining,' a simple science among those ingenuous people. Years ago, when I first went out there, I lived in a king's guest-house. They treated the king's friend as the second man in the kingdom. I was honoured with the gift of a princess, who remains my consort, a woman of intelligence and good humour. I was honoured with feasts and dances ; but I was shy and strange to Africa ; these pleasures were barbarous in my sight and not a little vile. I flattered myself that I was a member of a superior race among savages. But now these people and myself have a mutual understanding, and their pleasures no longer awaken foul thoughts in me. Are the leapings of the tiger unclean ? The movements of those dances, the marvel of those movements in the final evolution, would startle you, awake your creative sense, Marichaud. ' Il faut que je danse ' would have a bronze counterpart. Ah ! come back with me to that land of fulfilment. I'll teach you medicine—teach you to swallow poison, to kill fever, to deliver yourself fearlessly into the hands of Nature, to be straight and clean as a wild animal freed from the conventions and convenances of society. I'll teach you not to debase the body for the soul, not to lose the soul in ' evil pleasures,' What are those evil pleasures but good seen with a damaged eye ?

" Now that the war is over I shall remain in Africa. I heard my country was at war ; I came to look at it. I found the war as matchless as my exile. Do you understand what spirit has been amongst you ? Ah,

no! Ah, no! You cling to the wreck of the old world, and cry, 'Save us, O that which we formerly worshipped.' A god has been in the midst of you, slaying your foolishness in his wrath. Oh, I believe in the gods, Marichaud. Ha ha!"

Prudhom laughed a huge laugh, and slapped his thighs, stretched himself, and stroked his loins. He is an immense and genial tiger.

"I suppose," he went on, "that you would languish out there for intellectual companions. Do you suppose I or my friends or my wives are imbeciles? God forbid! Come out there, you infernal genius; the beauty of that life is lost on fools. Come back with me, leave this unfruitful life, leave this sterility; live again as man was intended to live, in a way that he has forgotten. You shall marry one of my daughters, a queen of twelve years old worth a thousand head of cattle, you shall flourish and prosper, you shall extend in dominion and virtue, you shall become like myself, a man of many sons."

Prudhim Pasha stared at me with the wide sure stare of a man certain of his own truth. I imagined I saw him as he was in Africa, a tremendous animal, innocent and brave. He could meet Nature face to face. What cared he for the delicate nonsense that threads soul to soul in the maze of this world? Intimate of the mountains, friend of the great rolling plains, he was beyond ambition and aspiration. Prudhim Pasha looked at me as I supposed he looked at the Princes of Nyanza, and I reminded him in a subdued voice that he had not begun the tale of the two women.

"I forgot," he replied, "that you were a man to whom one can talk. Now I remember you are not like most fellows, a stone wall that throws off the sputter of one's loquacity. To hell with the story of

the women ! It is only one of a myriad of mad tales ; some day I will tell it to you with others : tales of the prodigious bride it took ten men to capture, of our Atalanta who led her lover a race up Ruwenzori, and was found frozen with him in an everlasting embrace ; tales of a mocking spirit in the ling groves of the hill country, and cheating devils who haunt the lobelia bushes at full moon and bring women to shame. I will tell you also the story of the dancing husband who became a palm-tree, and a thousand tales of the evil-eye. Come out with me and I will give you the half of my kingdom. There are women there, if women please you, as perfect as that white thing behind you, more perfect ; they are alive, I embrace them, they give me children."

I yearned towards Prudhom, yearned to transport myself into his country, although I knew that his tongue had got the better of truth.

" There is nothing to learn in civilization about life, but complexity," he said.

" And," I answered solemnly, out of loyalty to you, Marguerite, to Paris, to the past, " there is nothing to learn in Africa that I cannot have here of love."

" No," he agreed, and rose to go away, " but there life and love are in harmony ; here they are in conflict. Good night," he added, " thank you for listening to me ! " And he went.

He had not mentioned my gift, and I had the grace not to do him the impertinence of offering it to him again.

When he had gone I became dreamy and depressed, I was sad ; I wanted you. I sat a long while staring at nothing, and thought of this and that. I seemed to have won and lost something very beautiful ; to have been upon the verge of a great wonder that was now vanished, leaving a void before me. I was tired.



After half an hour my good health asserted itself. Fear—I was in a sense afraid, fear ran away and sanity returned. I thought of love; I looked at my woman, and suddenly cried out:

“Oh, fortunate Marichaud! you nearly lost your statue to a chance visitor, but instead he added to her interest and gave you a new country.”

I laughed, I almost danced, and went to bed singing to the tune of the Meistersinger prize song:

“Statue d’une femme, Afrique et Margharita!”

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*November 6, 1920*

Tell me, Man of Magic, what is this divine uneasiness that bubbles through my life like bubbles in a sparkling wine, this Elysian wind that sets my nerves quivering like an æolian harp? Frequently I tremble with anticipation, as if I were about to discover an astonishing truth. I soar up into the blue sky imagining that I can defy the laws of gravity; then, alas! when I feel myself about to quit the influence of this terrestrial sphere, I come beneath the window-panes of heaven, against which invisible barrier I batter my wings like a poor bird, and finally, exhausted, fall back into the world.

Explain this godly delirium to me, Girrard.

I believe I am a student of the Gay Science, but I have unfortunately no actual idea of what it is I am studying. Sometimes I am possessed of the exquisite calm of Socrates, and think myself a happy man; then I feel or hear something forgotten, something new, something from another concept of truth, and,

finding that I am not expert enough in Gaiety to reconcile my two views, I think them both false, and strain my imagination after a third which shall indeed be the top stone of the pyramid. If I could only see the horizon of my own mind, I imagine that I might then have a conscious sense of life ; but my mind has no horizon : it is a nebulous gas spinning in the void. It is not even as stable as water. Point out something definite to me, Girrard, something static, something not cursed with elusiveness.

" I am," you say, " that I know, and that is all I know," but, alas ! frequently I am not. I come and go, possess ten or a dozen characters, in many of which I see no grain of me. I am a mist upon the earth, a nothingness ; then suddenly I cry, " Ha, I live ! " and feel the earth under my feet, but the next moment am dispersed.

What am I to do ? Become a slave of that illustrious humbug, Mathematics ? Then, at any rate, I shall be aloof from human error in the house of an infallible master, and imagine, being possessed of a definition of Infinity, that I understand the Infinite and hold the uttermost heavens between my hands.

*November 17, 1920*

#### A SHORT STORY

His friends killed Bertrand Simier.

That is, it became the custom to say, whenever he was mentioned, " Poor chap, he's a dead man," as one says of another, " He's the fellow that went bankrupt," or identifies another with, " Oh, yes, that fool married his cook ! "

In thought each of us had attended Simier's funeral, chosen a wreath, and sent imaginary condolences to



his widow, and when we visited him we hardly saw the living man for the ghost of his coffin. He lingered on for six months, and for six months we continued to think of him as defunct : " Poor chap, he's done for, his life's over," and so on, with genuine regret.

But he got better. And now we find him strange, as if he had returned from the grave : and he too seems to feel life odd, for he walks about as if he had ascended recently into this world, and dates everything from " my illness."

*November 25, 1920*

#### THE EIFFEL TOWER

By climbing upon the roof I can see the Eiffel Tower, that skeleton of a one-legged man. From this distance his general aspect is that of an ambitious attempt on the part of a spider to web together heaven and earth. In my imagination I clothe him with a pagoda and my one-legged man becomes a woman in a frilled skirt, the Peri, Pari-banou. The sun shines upon her and gives her a gold hat, and I, her chosen consort, am filled with a golden admiration for her. At our feet lies the little city of Paris, an elaborate toy, the expensive thing she gave me to play with in the adolescent period of my childhood ; for my immortal bride spared no pains to fit me for my future position and to give me every advantage that might help me to win an immortal place beside her.

I stand above Paris, a giant. If I dared to touch such brittle objects, I would pick up the Arc de Triomphe and the Cathédrale de Notre Dame and put them in my china cabinet, for now that I am become an Emperor I would like to preserve one or two of the trifles of my infancy to show genera-

tions yet unborn the splendour that I had under my young dominion. Wonderful City! Wonderful Peri! Wonderful Marichaud! Like Aladdin's uncle, I can transport you withersoever I desire. The magic lamp burns in my heart. Until I sell it for a tinselled sham, until death steals it from me, you are my slaves. I imagine that I shall not be such a fool as to part with it; and as for death, I have good grounds for supposing that one day I shall be elected an "Immortal", perhaps in my sixtieth year. Ambition lies in wait for every brave man, to tempt him to foolishness; but I think I am immune from extravagant desires, from desires, that is, which lie beyond my power of attainment, such as to hang a roc's egg under my dining-room chandelier. Nor have I a wife from whom I keep my secrets, who, out of the goodness of her heart, will try to further my interests and thus bring about my downfall.

I have told a lie: I have one foolish ambition, and that is to become an acrobat. I know by the miserable way I climb about this roof that I am grotesquely unfitted for that profession; besides, had I the daring of a mountaineer and the agile grace of a cat, I am now too old to apprentice myself to the acrobatic business. Nevertheless, I believe I would exchange my whole position for the power to make double turns, to twitch myself from the ground over a row of six chairs, or to fall gracefully in somersaults from the top of a high ladder. Last night I felt the full strength of the barrier between myself and my desire. I was bewitched by an equestrienne.

I took a box at the circus, and after dinner at the Café de Paris dragged Jerome away from his wine to see Groc.

The dinner was an excellent one. Our stomachs were attuned to it by an hors d'œuvre orchestrated for

thirty different ingredients, sardines, I will guarantee, from Sardinia, Baltic herring, white caviare, which mortals may now eat since the general can no longer pay for it, mayonnaise beyond the dream of any Mayonnais, truffles snuffled up by pigs, abstemious pigs under Lenten vow, otherwise these dainties would never have been on the table. We were served with lobster fried alive, whose pains I was prepared to expiate in Purgatory, lounging as I did in security upon the yellow brocade divans of the Nirvana of the Epicure. I have a recollection of lamb out of season, of fresh November peas, new potatoes, asparagus. I faintly remember a fairy fricassee and other strange delights, and the memory of that banquet brings back to me a vision, ignoble perhaps, but as fine in technical equality as any produced by Fra Angelico's fasting, of a crowd of guzzling millionaires and spendthrifts at closely set white tables. They kept up a gentle ripple of movement, like fat poppy heads in a breeze; among them, waiters with sweat pouring from their faces dashed to and fro, shouting in a peculiar lingo, snapping their fingers, clapping their hands. The leader of the orchestra dodged here and there like a black butterfly, musically complimenting now this woman, now that, and the orchestra, sunk in the noise of conversation, somehow pulsed in time with his ambulatory serenadings. The strife of violins and voices rose in sharp concatenation, but I passed away into the distance of half-intoxication, and the din came to me muted to a soothing harmony of rhythms.

After coffee more delicious than any served in the Califate of Bagdad, I rose as well as I was able, triumphantly, from my seat, filled with a sense of far away and many years hence, conscious that Jerome had dined beyond imagination at my expense. I know

few greater pleasures than that of astonishing a friend with a perfect dinner, though it may cost me, as this particular one did, a day's output from the mines of El Dorado, which I have the good fortune to own.

We were not sober when we entered the circus. We found all the women there adorable and lovely, even the old box attendant. I sang softly : "Dolores ! Dolores ! Sous les ombres fantasques," and gave her a hundred-franc note. Inside the box we sank into velvet obscurity. Neither Jerome nor myself is the kind of man who ends an evening ignominiously. We were both in heaven at a circus of the gods. The opera could have afforded us no better voices than this, Rabelais no greater overflowing of wit, the Olympic games no finer athletes. We echoed to each other the sentiments that this was Art, this was Life, this was, in fact, all that the Soul could Desire. In between his enthusiasms Jerome breathed out all his secrets twice. He had been a friend of Duse. A lad such as I was could hardly appreciate what that meant. Duse was old and he young, but what of that ? He knew Spinelli intimately. His grandmother had died and left him a million. How glad I was that his grandmother had been so considerate ; my Jerome deserved that death of half-a-dozen grandmothers. He swore we should share everything half and half. I agreed. Share everything—yes, everything—there was no other possible form of friendship. I knew quite well that as a fact Jerome's forbears were all long ago laid to rest, but in the moment of enthusiasm I forgot it. Jerome lives upon the blowing of the wind, and upon such windfalls as it occasions from the branches of his acquaintances' generosity. His only asset is his good-humoured wit, most reproachable wit, that belongs to the stuff the printers rejected and is sung after dinner round the wine flagons of



heaven by God's true men to the well-tempered harp of David.

Jerome told me the life-story of his little dog, whose ambition was to attain to a she-Borzoi, and for whom he had had made a collar frilled with the silky fur of that incomparable beauty by way of consolation. I think Groc's Liliputian fiddle reminded him of Tou-Tou, over whose memory he shed a couple of tears. Tou-Tou had recently been reduced to ashes, a little handful, kept now in a potpourri jar on the drawing-room mantelpiece. Amiable Jerome ! I regret that it is impossible to give his version of these sad histories. We were very merry. The more Groc fiddled the merrier we became. We leant over the box and clapped outside it as only men irresponsible with wine do ; and shouted bis so fervently that a woman in a hat of no earthly milliner's composition looked up and smiled and contracted her houri's eyes. Jerome was for having her immediately into the box.

At this moment the next turn was announced, and our attention was distracted by the entry into the arena of a white horse bearing upon its broad white back an equestrienne. I seized my binoculars, and, although the lady passed quite near me, stared at her through them with the intensity of a shipwrecked sailor staring at a passing barque.

Lovely creature !

I rang for the attendant and ordered flowers, red roses if heaven favoured me ; then turned again and fixed my opera-glasses on the rider. I put them down in despair ; though they brought her so close to me that I could see into her eyes, they baffled me with a sense of remoteness. Her eyes did not see me. Horrible to know that I was nothing more to her than the fat man in the next box, that her first attention was concentrated upon herself.

La Corelli, as the programme called her, was all that any man can dream of any woman. Her exquisite legs, which appealed at once to my sculptor's sense, were exposed in tights of the rose-pink colour that one admires so much in one's infancy. For the rest of her had been meted out very sparingly, a pink gauze ballet skirt and a satin bodice of the same exquisite shade, which bodice was crossed in the fashion of years and years ago, with a wide blue satin ribbon, the sky blue Order of the Legion of Titania. Degas was a lucky devil to have instituted himself court painter where such beauty reigned. My charmer's face was as lovely as a china doll's. Her pink cheeks, scarlet lips, black eyes and golden curls shone all the more radiantly for the sombre earthly crowd of us that filled the circus. Our hideous black clothes and most un-ideal red and sallow faces contrasted as if in compliment with her delightful beauty. Marguerite, she cut you out completely ; you seemed an Egyptian mummy in comparison, at least, you would have seemed one, if I had remembered you.

She did everything that mankind has been led to expect of an equestrienne in circus. Her superb Arab, splendidly whitened for the occasion, and bearing only the lightest of red morocco harness, cantered round the ring, while she vaulted like a sylph over his back or danced in the air. She stood like a butterfly poised upon his broad rump as he jumped a white ribbon held by the maître du cirque and the old clown Gambo ; she thrilled me with a thousand enviable somersaults, and, to crown all, burst through a succession of paper hoops held as high as he could reach by the clown on the top of two beer barrels. Too soon she galloped round the arena kissing her hands with perfect impartiality to us all, and vanished out of sight.



I was done for. Followed by Jerome, I rushed out of the box and found my roses, which by a miracle had come in time. We plunged into the flood of people ebbing to the foyer bar. The tide was against us, and I cried damnation to the invincibility of human flesh. At last we were in the brick and mortar alleyways of behind-the-scenes. I was known of course at the circus, the bourne of at least one of my youthful infatuations. An odour of lions and sawdust came to us upon a terribly stale draught. The cheerless brick passages, like a Metro. Subway without advertisements, were neither dirty nor clean.

"C'est tout un peu mince," said Jerome, with a sneeze, and it was a little thin, like the bare bones of a dead man. Two persons with red noses and little hats made room for us to pass, and a young dandy with a diamond-headed cane smiled at us as we stumbled up three concrete steps. I saw Groc at the door of his dressing-room with his wig off, but the rest of him in his rig, talking seriously to the stage manager. He nodded to me.

"The old fellow looks like two tunes," said Jerome, and it is a tribute to Groc's genius that they harmonized. These people and doors and corridors were shadows to me. I was anxious for their termination, to be quit of them, to bring them to an end; anxious with an anxiety only known to man in the pursuit of woman.

We were admitted into a brightly lit little boudoir. I saw the loveliest creature in the world sitting in a white chair, still in her circus dress, but about to give herself to her dresser, who was shaking out a peignoir. The room was sweet with the scent of red roses and pomade. There were flowers, photographs, mirrors, lace, a fur coat, a hat with paradise plumes; there were pearls, rings, feminine undergarments, Jerome, the dresser, and myself, crowded into a dream. The

dresser looked at me slyly, and I felt irritated as if she had the power to disperse all this. Time seemed to be slipping from me, and, in a great hurry to keep up with it, I made not the slightest attempt to disguise my infatuation from the beautiful young woman for whose sake this world had come together. I looked at her. I loved her. I loved her because she was beautiful. I loved her in her circus clothes, with her doll's complexion and artificial hair, as simply as one loves a porcelain piece or a blue sky in a picture. I had lost my stupid intellectual taste and silly culture. I was natural for once in my life. I delighted in her as a child delights in a doll, and wanted to take her in my arms and kiss her. I wanted to take her home and call her mine, to dress and undress her, to play with her and admire her. I wanted to press her to me and make the words "I love you" come out of her mouth. If the dresser had touched her I should have wept; I wanted her just as she was. The wine had cleared away the world from my mind.

I bent over my roses as I put them in her arms and whispered :

"Madame, I love you. I should like to give you everything you wish. I should like to take you home in my automobile and tell you how much I love you."

She looked up at me modestly and answered, I thought, with regret in her adorable voice :

"Monsieur, you are very kind. Some other time perhaps; but I am newly married to an acrobat, the one that dances on the tight wire."

Ten thousand curses on the young gentleman with the diamond-headed cane! Instinct selected him as my rival. Damn his infernal smirk! What was I to do? There was nothing to be done of course but to go away.

She held out her hand to me with a delightful gesture, and, as I kissed it, said with a delicate appreciation of my situation :

“ I am so sorry.”

I threw myself outside her room into the dismal passage, and there fell to pieces. Remember I was drunk, remember I fancied myself a beau of the 'nineties. I had tumbled out of a romantic story, out of a story that would never happen again, into the brick and mortar of this world.

I reeled out into the open air on Jerome's arm and scrambled into my car. My little work of art had not come off. The evening had been a failure. Instead of permitting me to accomplish a little piece that I could have looked back upon and admired, fate had knocked it unfinished out of my hands, and scattered it in fragments all over the streets of Paris.

I was in a very bad temper, and charged the whole affair, in my heart, to some gaucherie of Jerome's. If he had not stuffed himself into the dressing-room behind me? If . . . I know not what. I clenched my hands and sat forward in the automobile scowling furiously.

“ She has married an acrobat, Jerome,” I snarled, as if that had been his fault. “ A perfect physical marvel of a man ; a man of balance, of exactness, of nicety, of rhythm, of poise, of decision, of courage, of verve.”

I felt as if I had delivered myself of a piece of accomplished oratory.

Jerome slapped me on the back with toleration. It was kind of him to come home with me ; he could have spent a much more appropriate midnight in other company. It was kind of him to thump me on the back ; it knocked the lump of the apple of discord out of my throat.

" Oh, Jerome ! Jerome ! " I cried passionately, " you and I do not know what it is to be alive ! What is a sculptor, with training only in his eyes and hands, beside an acrobat who can adjust his whole body to a hair's breadth ? "

I thrust my head out of the window to conceal my emotion. Jerome's forethought had instructed my man to drive us out to the Bois de Boulogne to cool our heads. A white frost covered the ground and the bosky undergrowth was as white as coral. I thought I was under the sea. Tearfully I looked upward at the stars, and there I saw my acrobatic pair twirling to the music of the spheres. The husband glided along the zenith and swung upon the trapeze of Orion's Belt, the lady rode old Leo out of Cancer into Capricorn, and the clown, mounted upon the Ram, charged across the heavens with the glittering hoop of Saturn, through which my lost love sprang as smoothly as a shooting star.

. . . . .

This morning I climbed upon the roof. I am not as level-headed as the roof-cleaners of the Louvre, who walk upright down the steep slates as if they were walking down an ordinary hill ; even upon all fours I am put to shame by a lame cat. I dared not look below me. I fixed my hope on the ridge-pole. I told myself I was a fool, and that if this gentle slope were three feet from the ground I should run up it. The most dangerous exploit is climbing out of the dormer window, but there I had the window-frame and the gutter to cling to. The old man in the attic opposite thought I was mad, and I was conscious as I crawled up the roof that he was staring at my posterior. I wished I had the courage to turn round and make a grimace at him ; I wished I had the head to stand

upright and dance, or the sang-froid to roll carelessly back on to the roof of the dormer window.

Once astride the ridge-pole, however, I became king of the castle. The irritating old man and his window-box of withered tomato plants had set beneath the eaves. The chasm of the street had disappeared. It was a perfect November morning, clear as crystal, though mist lay along the Seine and across the valley of Auteuil. I looked towards the Eiffel Tower and sighed.

"Oh, illustrious fairy!" I prayed, "give me the mental balance to walk across the roofs of Paris to your feet. Give me perfect realization of my physical self. Enable me to execute a *pas seul* on these slates or to astonish the wicked old imbecile opposite by diving deftly in at his window."

"Marichaud! Marichaud!" she replied to this earnest prayer, "you are still a child. When you have grown to your full height these technical extravagances of human motion will no longer excite you. One day you will be the greatest man in Paris, and I shall be the only woman tall enough for you to embrace."

"Munificent fairy," I answered, "you are too gracious."

"Give me no further cause for jealousy," she commanded, "and you will be a happy man."

"I will obey you implicitly," I replied humbly, and, with one exception, I really intended to do so.

CAFÉ VOLTAIRE

*December 10, 1921*

I have a great curiosity to know, Girrard, what are the nuptial rites of the Great Whales. Their weddings



are celebrated in deep waters ; but how ? On this subject the Encyclopædists are either shy or ignorant.

“ NOCES DE BALEINES ”

What a subject for an heroic sculpture ! I would place it in a large glass tank and have people visit it subterraneously. There, Girrard, you see I have the mind of a man who models wax peaches.

CAFÉ VOLTAIRE

*December 15, 1921*

Last night, Girrard, I met a Dutchman, a Mynheer van Jonk, a sinister creature with brows as black as a beetle and a Javanese eye, a half-caste scamp of an ex-sergeant from the piebald hotch-potch of the Dutch Army, who was hung with a great reputation for primeval inspiration in the Rijks-Museum. He wears an elegant pseudonym among the immortals.

I never drank a glass of wine with a blacker, filthier beast, nor suffered so much internal loathing and nervous antipathy for a fellow-creature. “ He has eaten man,” I said to Barbier.

My infernal sensitivities cramped my eyes until myself and my neighbours grew as thin as those blasted Javanese puppets Georges Lefanu lets loose upon his unfortunate acquaintances, those “ only works of art ” of his mad, woe-begotten mind, which he preconceives we must worship at sight, which we must ache to see dance in a “ splendid concatenation of colour.”

Well, old man, I swallowed as much of that Hell-roasted Javanese sparrow with sauce Hollandaise as politeness towards Lefanu demanded, and then came



home and buried myself in Regnier's exquisite tales ; but all to no use, my imagination was polluted.

When Lefanu is at the heels of a hero he becomes sociable. He whips up his friends like a Master of Hounds and tears round Paris in full cry after a fox on a string. He kills the fox, or the string breaks, and he becomes shy and elusive. Last night he feasted his fox at the "Voltaire", an extravagance which he can ill afford. I can see his thin face sharply looking round to see if there is anybody he knows in the café. "Why, yes, there is Barbier and Marichaud. Alphonse is too rich to live ; he won't have the face to drink at my expense," and in ten minutes up he comes and gives me the great honour of van Jonk's society. Barbier becomes aloof and silent ; we sit for half an hour listening to a fool's theories on art. I am wrong there ; the Dutchman was not a fool ; his theories were original and interesting, but—what a personality ! I shrivelled very small, for van Jonk lived in a one-man world. After a while, when I was almost on the point to shrivel out of being, I said without conviction that we were due at a theatre, signed to François that the bill could wait until the morning, and escaped in the midst of those profuse farewells on both sides which are employed to conceal disorganization of the temper.

The evening was ruined. I left Barbier, and as quickly as possible shut myself away from the world. Books, wine, music—you know my versions of Beethoven only too well, Girrard—nothing could drive from my mind an image of Lefanu's old Scarlet Gimcrack dancing a jig to van Jonk's mesmeric eye, nor purge my stomach of the disgusting nausea which always afflicts it after the slightest odour of van Trompery.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*December 31, 1920*

You write, Girrard, Have I ever seen a ghost ? Are you joking, are you contracting that tiresome disease, spiritualism, or do you ask me as a matter of fact ? My dear man, I will take it you have not lost your head ; I will take it you are not flippant. No ghost have I seen, nor poltergeist, nor spook, nor fairy, nor phantom, nor angel. I have never shaken at the knees before a realization of the supernatural, but I am always on the alert. I keep a corner of my heart quaking with anticipation, and am excited in the proximity of dark mirrors, long curtains, and wardrobes of the deep capacious kind. At times I am "followed", but, though I glance furtively over my shoulder, I have never seen "It"—you understand me ? I have also been driven suddenly, wildly, hysterically away from lonely spots by Something into human company, and twice since I became a man I have bolted for my life—once across the dunes, and once out of my studio.

But though I have never seen a ghost I contain one, or two, if you like. I remember Strindberg was troubled with a doppleganger, dopplemann, shadow-self, whatever you like to call it. He encountered him once in a public lavatory—in Berlin, was it ? Well, I have something of the sort, not so striking perhaps, a very common creature in that most of us own a similar bogey, but of a distinguished character and lonely, silent habits. The Marichaud who wafts about amongst his friends in a continuous polka has, as ghost companion, a perfect hatchet of a spook, who thinks but rarely speaks, is one ideaed, that is, devotes himself to work with icy ardour. He keeps

me running about to collect material for him, closets me with him frequently, bleeds me white of all my energy, takes my body after he has cast out this poor devil, and having toggged himself up in it leaves me waiting in thin air while he shuts himself up in my studio. Sometimes he interviews my friends. Then with deep anxiety I see him frighten them into awe of me, and when I have crept back into my own skin again no foolishness, no flippancy on my part will ever quite dispel the fear or respect or dislike they got of me from my Übermensch of a shadow. But I will do him this justice : if it were not for that tyrant I would never lift a finger, never trouble to coagulate my nebulous dreams, never be referred to as Marichaud the sculptor, and lose all my friends save you, Girrard, and Barbier, and Marguerite Fleury.

Or perhaps, as I suggested, I have two ghosts and drive them like a pair in hand. Perhaps I, the real I, sit on the box of my soul's carriage like a coachman and drive this circus nag, and this black, gaunt other beast, across the field of Time. God hope, in that case I am not Phaeton !

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*January 1, 1921*

I wrote to you a few hours ago, Girrard, in the end of an old year. It is now one o'clock in the morning, chill, still, and strange. There is no moon and the stars are clear. I can see them through the open window. This is the first hour of a new year, a year that I have never seen before, with which I am not yet on familiar terms.

Paul Barbier sits on the sofa in his lean grey suit, smoking a pipe. I love him. To-night we have

travelled in far regions. It was I, come home suddenly from distant places, that opened the window to hear the bells of Paris ring out on the still midnight air.

We have neither of us had the courage to shut it.

*January 4, 1921*

#### LE BLOC D'OR

Some time ago a fat man came to see me, a Monsieur Hyacinthe Simon. He called about three o'clock one afternoon. I came into my study straight from the studio with my hands rough with dust and my old corduroy clothes hanging on me like the garments of a scarecrow. Old Simon was standing by the fire-place with his top-hat in his huge wash-leather paw and a very serious look on his round face, as if he regretted some sad news he had to impart. He was magnificently dressed. Gold seals hung from his vast buff waistcoat, and his top-hat reflected the view through the window. He wore a new collar shining with the bluish perfection of the manufacturer's finish, a new grey silk tie fastened in place with a pearl, and a new grey suit of that hybrid cut affected by old men of proportions in the afternoon. I had neither seen nor heard of him before.

"Monsieur Simon," I said, and bowed.

"Honoured to make your acquaintance," he replied in a soft highish voice, and leaned forward until I feared he would lose his equilibrium.

"Take a chair, won't you?"

"Thank you." He sat on the edge of a chair still clinging to his top-hat.

I went over to the fire-place and stood on the spot he had just vacated. I was vague and absent-minded, preoccupied with the work I had just left, and half asleep.

"It is fine weather," I said, and thought anxiously of the stroke I had been about to make with my chisel when I had been called away. Now that precise stroke would never be made, which was a pity.

"Very tolerable," replied Monsieur Simon from the far distance, and added, with a nervousness that recalled me to a sense of time and place, "you are a sculptor?"

"Yes, certainly," I agreed, and thought he had probably come to order a family tombstone or memorial plaque.

"I—I do not know whether you condescend—how exactly—but I leave that to you," he stuttered. "I have been sent to you by Vernie et Cie; I have come to inquire whether you condescend to take portraits in marble—make statues of living people?"

"I have done so," I said, and smiled.

"You must understand," he went on, "it is like this. I have just bought the Hôtel Vevier in the Rue R——, you see. I will not disguise the fact from you I was not always in the position to live in a large house; it is best to be frank. I am not ashamed; we cannot always be where we are—that's sense, isn't it? The place is furnished with good stuff, old stuff, what they call 'of the Period,' but the art gallery is bare. So I went to Vernie and said, 'Put me on to a good sculptor,' and they sent me to you. I bank with Morgan Harges, Place Vendôme, and the Crédit Lyonnais. Now, Greece and Rome are bought up, and though there are some nice things at the Luxembourg—I like that woman on the mattress—of course that's locked up capital. I have been to Meudon, but there again knowing you can't get it simply makes you hungry. I have always had a hobby for marble; besides, an empty gallery looks bad. Now you are young," he said looking at me



more cheerfully, "and you may think I am a fool, but we are taught to admire plain men in the public parks, waistcoats and all that, what do you say?" And he held up his fat arms as if he had made a splendid announcement.

"I understand," I said gravely; "you wish me to take a bust of yourself."

"Anyhow you like," he answered excitedly, and returned to his stiff pose, as if he were at the photographer's expecting every minute to hear the click of the shutter.

He had three chins, a button nose, and two patches of grey hair on his face. Two other patches of stiff, short hair grew out behind his ears. I laughed in my heart.

"If it will not be a reasonable success——" he said, closely watching my expression.

"There is no reason why it should not be a success," I replied; "it depends entirely on the specifications." An architectural manner seemed suited to the occasion.

"There are none!" he cried, with the splendid magnanimity of a monarch remitting a thousand prisoners from jail. "You are free. Name your price, take your time, *le vieux gosse s'accomodera!*"

"If you will do me the honour of taking a look at my work," I said, "you will have some idea of my capabilities and inclinations."

"Very proper," he replied. "Only a fool takes the train in the opposite direction. It is an adventure, this marble business. I am not one of those fellows, you know, who say art is a waste of time and send all artists to the devil. Art is like a fine sunset after a hard day's work."

I led the way out of the room, and he followed me with his silk hat still at a correct angle in his left hand. We went into the studio. He became very



shy—so shy that I am sure he saw nothing and stood at the door in utter confusion. By degrees I decoyed him into the middle of the floor, got him smoking, and made him walk about. At last he began to talk again.

“ I was born at Lyons, you know,” he said. “ My father was a weaver, and we had a bust of Napoleon—only plaster, about four inches high—on the top of the crockery shelf. When I was a boy things inside me were not quite what they were later. I was an idle little devil. Whenever I could I would sneak off from what I ought to be doing and go to look at big houses. I began to want one long before we old chaps think little sprats have those ideas in their heads—when I was six or seven. I preferred those with a lot of glass in the windows, and made up my mind to be a window cleaner so that I could look inside. I remember old Petard ; he was a man-servant at the Hôtel Britannique, he married my aunt, and they used to quarrel about mussels. She liked fried mussels, but he said they were rank poison, and told stories of deaths they had had at the Britannique from mussel sauce. Those are the only things I have ever been afraid of. Well, I used to get Petard to describe suites at the Britannique to me when I was quite a little chap, before you would think furniture had entered my head, and I had a wonderful strange idea of ormolu clocks and glass candelabra. Petard liked plaster work, with fruit and Cupid heads ; and when they altered the *salle à manger* he stole a plaster Cupid and gave it to me. It had no behind and was hollow inside ; that was a grave disappointment to me, but that is what gave me a longing for statuary. I began to want something that went all round.”

Not a word of comment on my work did he make until we sat down on the divan and he relinquished

his hat. Then he said, waving his left hand like a showman towards the figures around us:

"I like arrigorical stuff." And left it at that. There are no allegories in my studio. "But," he continued, patting his stomach, "I don't know how this would model. What do you think? Best be content with arrigory. What do you think?"

I looked at him seriously, intently, for in spite of his stomach and his chins he attracted me.

"What is your idea? I can see you have something in your head."

"The point is," I asked, "do you insist on a crease in your trousers; must you recognize your waistcoat buttons?"

"Like a great sow? I don't want to be a waxwork." He smiled and then added a little apprehensively, "You are not contemplating the nude?"

"I had not that in mind."

"Something antique, then?"

"Nor that," I laughed, and he laughed with me softly and with undulations over his vast surface like a jocose eiderdown. His vast surface! I began to see that surface turned to marble. My Medusa-genius contemplated him as a victim. She has only to contemplate, and the dangerous process commences. I got up and pinned several sheets of paper on my easel.

"Life is a funny thing," said Hyacinthe Simon, pretending not to notice what I was up to. "First you are innocent and then in a muddle, and something comes out of the muddle like out of a dark egg, and it's your career. I don't understand men that haven't got an ambition. Young men, yes; but not men of thirty or so. If a man says to me, 'It takes me all my time to live. I haven't any use for ambition,' I say, 'You get an ambition, my lad, and you'll find living's

included.' I never ask a very young fellow what he wants because ten to one he doesn't know, but I make him go back a bit and tell me what he used to want. Then I know what he's good for. You know," he concluded, "I have begun to think a bit now I've stopped work."

I understood that the statue of himself was to be the headstone of his ambition.

"You are in a lucky position, monsieur," I said. I tore the top sheet off the easel and threw it on the floor. Monsieur Hyacinthe was blooming.

"Drastic," he said, "a drastic noise."

I made another sketch of him, six or seven huge sketches of his carcass, each of which, as I tore it off the easel, tore a film from my eyes. The old man became enraptured by my activities and stared at me solemnly. At last, as if his curiosity and vanity could no longer be restrained, he got up and marched over to me.

He stared at the drawing of himself on the easel with a baffled expression, and after a while said very slowly as if he were groping with his mind in a dark place :

"You know, you artists remind me of my youth. I used to feel a bit like the things I see here sometimes. It gave me the stomach-ache. You know I have got something inside me that people don't know about, that has never married and never could, and does not go out for an airing with my umbrella."

Rodin saw beauty like a form half hid in shadows ; sometimes he called it completely forth, but for the most part he was content to let it lie half concealed in the darkness that hangs round the feet of creation. I am perhaps of coarser fibre than Rodin. For me beauty sits on the top of a mountain in the clear, strong light of day. I cannot compromise with

twilight ; I cannot be satisfied until I detach my idea from the womb—until it lives, a complete, independent being. When my rainbow arches the valley without a break, without a hesitation, then I am content.

I did not answer Simon's philosophies, and he pretended not to be disconcerted. He went back to his sofa and sat down patiently. I felt an extraordinary pity for him. But why ? He was happy, he was having his portrait taken. I was arrogant ; my pity came from arrogance perhaps, but there it was. It is a pity I often feel for successful men of this world. His new tie, his new suit, his pearl, that in particular brought me near to tears.

The studio was full of afternoon light ; overhead white April clouds paraded in grandeur across a bright blue sky. The half drawn canvas screens beneath the glass roof glowed a rich amber. The windows on the north side stood open, and through them I could see the top of the pear-tree in the courtyard, white with blossom. Birds sang and a cool draught fluttered about my head, sweet with the smell of spring, and here on to the paper before me, escaped from the charcoal in my fingers—what ? The veritable Simon ? More than that and less, truth and the moon shadow of an idea. Truth was there seen on a grand scale. I had found the scale for a new embodiment of beauty.

Some men, no matter what their estate, play for safety. I am a gambler. A safe game, you say, when Providence does not wag the red flag of starvation continually in your face. I agree, I only gamble with immortality. Do me the honour to remember that as my life is not at stake I play in cold blood. That disorder has killed many artists. Though no one will believe it, it costs me many pains to heat my



cold blood up to boiling point. But enough of the pathology of the card-table.

I set aside all my other work and became furiously enamoured of Monsieur Simon's proportions. I ate them, breathed them, dreamed of them, wrapt them about me like a garment. I drew strength from the grey houses in the street, repose from the breadth of the sky, quality from the fine weather. Several days passed before what I saw in my mind was felt in my limbs, before the thing I contemplated was possessed by my entire consciousness. At last, when my courage was at its height and my hand sure, I began to work directly upon the marble. Rehearsals were over, this was a public performance.

Simon came to me always scrupulously dressed, as if he were visiting a lady. The splendour of his attire hovered over my work and imparted something to it which in this case old clothes could not have given, imparted a sureness to its lines and a generous quality to its restraint. Yes, believe me, those sumptuous waistcoats steadied my hand, and the ten-thousand-franc pearl was a third eye to me. It gave me the power to see clearly in the darkness of creation. All the time, whenever the cling-clang of my tools permitted it, old Simon talked, and instead of a distraction his talk was soothing; I could not have worked without it. It took the remnant of my thought from myself, and I forgot to be frightened. He always talked of the past, of the city of Lyons, of the time when he was a young man. He would tell me often:

"I lost my innocence, you know, like everybody else, and got into a muddle, and yet I always kept two ideas clear in my head, one was a big fortune, and the other was a big house. I began work as a warehouse clerk. I hated figures, but I kept at it for five



years. I broke myself in, because—what do you think?—I had an inclination to be flighty and to go off after any red herring. There's only two houses that leads to of any size; Prison or the Poor Hospital, so I broke myself in. One day something happened to me: I found I had the silk business at my finger ends. I got a notion I was indispensable. I was a sharp young fellow and tried the leaving trick. It worked. In a few years the firm became Sevrier, Josef et Simon, and until the war we did so-so. The war lifted me out of the ruck. I bought the firm. Money ran into my pockets. And now here we are. I won't pretend about it, the dinner table has been my altar, a big dinner table in a big house. I've lived all my life in a little church, and now I have got a cathedral in which to thank God. I like a lot of people round me, people and all their children. A rich man can have a lot of friends. Now some folk lock themselves up when they get money and say, 'You did not know me when I was poor, you shall not know me now.' But I don't. It makes people happy to know a rich man—it's natural; so I say 'God bless all of you,' and open my front door wide. I don't care who comes in."

In the joy of his freedom and his big house Monsieur Simon often said the same thing, even twice in the same day. I heard frequently tell of "a dark time in my life when I was in confusion. I've never forgotten it, I dream about it. Everybody at sixes and sevens, all in a muddle, but I stuck to the notion of my Noah's Ark and now I am in it." That long-past time contained something strange and inexplicable for him, and he aired it for my benefit, either because he felt I could throw some light on it, being myself strange and out of his common experience, or because he saw in it some bond of union between us.

“Now I am as right as rain,” opened another theme. “Men make too much of dying. Death can come when he likes ; I have got home. I should not like to have died on the wayside, but now here we are, and I am ready.”

There was no pretence about Simon. He had the simple vanity of a modest man. What matter if he had made only one discovery in life, the discovery of a desire ; he had had the sense to pursue it. Now it was realized. After a first nervousness he came with a dignified composure and made himself at home with me. I took him seriously, and since he had the delicacy of feeling never to pass remarks on my work we were friends. In due course I heard all about his wife, Madame Simon, and about his daughter, Louise. Louise had “married a poor louse,” but he was proud of her ; she brought the grand manner into his house. All the beauty of the past, his love affairs, and the strange feelings he had had in his youth were incarnate in her. She bought her dresses in those hidden establishments that make for Society. “I am a child to her—a child,” he exclaimed ; “but what of that, she was once a child to me.”

Sometimes Barbier came in. Barbier has the freedom of my studio, and directly Simon found that Barbier was not a duke or a wild animal, he repeated to him everything he had said to me, not because he had nothing else to say, but because there seemed at that time to be nothing more marvellous to talk about. The miracle had happened : he had attained his ambition.

One evening after I had ceased work he looked at Barbier, who happened to be there, and then at me, and said with fearful joy :

“You fellows must come and dine with me when this is finished. Why, what am I saying? You

must not wait until then, if you will do me the honour."

I said his instinct was quite right, I must wait until I had done with him as a model. It would confuse the Idea if I came before. Never invite your doctor to dinner unless you are in good health, or you dine with the ghost of a consultation.

"That's sense," he replied, "very good sense," then pulled on his great yellow gloves and went cheerfully away.

When he had gone Barbier and I would sit down on the divan and stare at the lines of my work in the fading twilight, and feel moved as if we were conscious of littleness in ourselves. Strange thing that a man is so often smaller than his ideas. I was in splendid health all this time, my self-control has never been as perfect. Though I had no courage, no inspiration unless Simon were present, I knew that I had no reason for fear, that my confidence would return with him. By some extraordinary accident I escaped during all that period from the common morbid reactions of the artist.

Simon gave me a huge number of sittings. He seemed to enjoy them, and I took advantage of his docility. I will not deny that towards the end of the time his presence began to suffocate me; I was in danger of dying of a surfeit of him. For the last week I worked with my nerves; I slept not at all, and was painfully aware not only of the minutest grain in the marble under my hand, but of all kinds of trivial details in my surroundings. I knew the weave of Barbier's suit by heart, the number of little balls in the carved beading along the foot of my bed, the comparative difference in texture of everything that I handled, and this although surface in variation was of no account in my work. *Le Bloc d'Or*, as Jerome christened

old Simon's statue, had but one texture, soft and yet severe, the logical result of form, not of chisel tricks.

The day came when I had accomplished what I had striven to do. I said nothing to Simon except to excuse myself of his presence for a few days. He was to return on Friday. I went down to Barbier's gentle grey studio ill with fatigue. I was happy, and as wild as I had been sober. I had done what I wanted. I had got exactly what I wanted for the first time. Every muscle in my body was sore with tension. I had strained my endurance just beyond the mark.

My mind became light and empty as a cloud. I found that I could not stay long in any one place. I must go back and look at my work, then I must run away from it. I must think that this might have been better done in a different fashion, that that should have been modified. I suffered all the doubts I had not had. The next day Barbier came and carried me off to Fontainebleau, but I did not see the country ; I who am ravished by a Parisian chestnut was blind to all the trees. That night the moon was large. I burst into tears, I was suddenly in despair ; the serenity of the moon mocked me, the passive unconcern of the night infuriated me. I became stupid, childish, idiotic. I swore at Barbier and told him that pride demanded that I should return at once and break my work in pieces. He made me drunk ; though violent in word, I was of course inactive, I could be led by the hand, and I knew it and was glad. Barbier had the love and patience to make a fool of me. There we sat outside a café drinking glass after glass of wine ; at least, I drank astonishingly. Barbier probably emptied half a dozen glasses on to the gravel ; he cannot stand up beside me in the presence of Bacchus. With what kindness he listened to the nonsense I poured out, with what care he manœuvred me into the



woods to see the sun rise ! We did not go to bed that night, and the next day passed away from us in the fields, a glorious day, half sleep, half a dream, that stole from the summer fields so softly that I never realized it had fled.

In the evening we drove back to Paris. I went to bed drugged with long hours in the open air and slept a dreamless night away. I awoke purged and sensible. In my absence the studio had been swept and cleaned, and dark blue felt had been laid around the statue, so that I was able to meet my late familiar antagonist in new circumstances and to take stock of him as a stranger, to meet him as a father meets his son after a long absence.

Towards noon Monsieur Simon appeared. He seemed surprised to see me in decent clothes, and a little disappointed perhaps to discover that I did own a waistcoat. I was not perhaps at heart quite as unusual and romantic as he had come to believe me. We went into the studio together.

Monsieur Simon stopped at the door and surveyed the unfamiliar blue felt.

"What?" he ejaculated. "Where? Is it—is it—ah!—is it finished?"

"Yes," I said, "it is."

Now came a dreadful moment in his life. He must say something, but what? He must find an opinion from somewhere; he must hunt in that huge void outside his experience for an appropriate word of like or dislike. He had not yet looked at the statue, but had kept his eyes fixed on the blue felt. Now he raised them slowly and stood a long while gazing at the white block of marble before him. Were those white, silent curves himself? Was that ample block of snow Hyacinthe Simon? Perhaps. He had sat in a chair and the snow of time had drifted over him. I wondered



if I had approached his thoughts. Most likely not. He went up to the statue presently and touched it, and at last gave up the struggle to put a sentence together.

"Wonderful," he murmured softly. "Wonderful!" But whether he was entranced by the whiteness and the smoothness of the marble, or whether he thought it marvellous that anything could be cut out of such hard stone, or whether his remark expressed something deeper, I could not tell.

He went over to the window, did not look out of it, and came back after a minute or two with a very red flush on his face. He made a supreme effort and spoke.

"I don't know what I think," he said. "I don't know what I think. I've been dreaming I was a boy again. No, no, no, you have not disappointed me, I'll have it. You have not upset me, but I have had a shock. I did not realize—— I don't know what I think."

He looked at me shyly and held out his hand. I gave him mine, and we shook hands and he embraced me.

With that we left the studio, and in the hall he shook my hands again.

No, no, no, he would not stay to lunch, he had a pressing appointment. I must come and see him often, often, often. "I may be a fool," he said, as he made for the front door. "I may be a simpleton, but I—you know, one's got to learn these things; it took me a long time to get used to the best statues having no eyes—I don't know what I think."

Though I often see old Simon and though he treats me as if I had the key of heaven, that was the last reference he ever made to the Bloc d'Or, except to intimate that a pantechicon, a vehicle as large as my studio, would call for it upon the following Tuesday.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*January 11, 1922*

Yes, I have read your book, estimable, double-sighted Girrard, your Fantasia of Cross Purposes. You are the only man I know who has derived any benefit from education. You are the only being of my personal acquaintance who makes one actually feel that humanity is not a mushroom growth without a history ; yet, unlike those people who insist on the antiquity of the human race, you do not insinuate that man's history is come to its full glory in this age, or that it is to be protracted to infinity. I know the world you must live in, situated on the borderland of the future with a clear prospect over the past. Most of us inhabit the valley of middle-earth and have scarcely a moment's curiosity to see over the surrounding hills. We are cut off from the dead, the future is inconceivable ; we are stuck like pins into the pin-cushion of the present, and are not in the least concerned when we begin to rust, as the majority of us do.

I can feel with you because I also make things. We know the morning and the evening of successive days of labour, and, like God, see that our work is either good or bad. What does the Maker of All Things think as He watches our feeble attempts to emulate His Divine Effort ? Has He a peculiar weakness for such as you and I, who scratch objects into being out of stone or write the history of dreams ? The small immortalities we win, are they rewards for following in Our Father's Footsteps ? Girrard, it is very perplexing to be what our fellow-men call an Artist. As I hold apart the past and the future with my two hands, often my strength fails ; they surge upon one another

like seas escaped from God's dominion and overwhelm me in their confusion.

I wish there were no time. Time is a blindness to me. I wish I had the timeless sight of the angels, to whom all things are immediate and everlasting.

"Now it came to pass that the veil of time fell from his eyes and he saw clearly, and lifting up his eyes he beheld all things that were and are and shall be, how none had any time or place and yet all were disposed."

Am I among the prophets, Girrard? No, because I cannot reach out to hold, my hands disperse whatever they touch. Also I suffer from the hysteria of amazement. How glorious to be possessed of the calmness and sovereign peace of a great man! The excitement that affects me in all my ways fastens up my mind and heart. When I become a great man I shall open my heart to many thoughts which at present I dare not entertain; I shall not be afraid of simplicity nor of the quiet sounds of life; I shall pursue whatever in that bright future shall seem to be the truth, through open and through hidden spaces, instead of scurrying, like a rat in a dark sewer, away from every strange noise.

*January 13, 1921*

#### A VAPOROUS CONVERSATION

Madame du Merry said to me the other evening. "Your generation is dying of the millennium."

I replied: "Most unfortunately—yes. We are not on the spot. We suffer from diffusion."

Madame du Merry is long and waxen, like a lapigeria flower; she lives in a blue Chinese boudoir among golden mandarins and never allows full daylight to reveal her forty years. After dark, candles in fantastic sconces are lit about her and the mandarins shine like moons at dusk.

"On a deep mountain lake there sailed a swan,  
Far, far away from any human soul."

Madame du Merry on her blue and gold recámier sails in the blue twilight of her life most like a swan, and we, her trout, rise around her on still evenings, to air out troutish souls, to give our opinions on the world beyond the mandarin moons, to pull the character of the universe to pieces.

"We are vague, we are inchoate," I went on.

"Diffusion?" said Madame du Merry, and her voice seemed to echo among the cliffs of a small and gloomy lake. "You suffer from diffusion. Explain yourself."

"Diffusion, the fault of education," I answered. "We are become a little this, a little that, and nothing in particular."

My words echoed also . . . "education . . . education . . . nothing, nothing, nothing in particular . . ."

"But you," she insisted, "you yourself have unity of purpose; you are direct—you are ferociously direct, Alphonse; you have only one interest, one destination."

"You flatter yourself if you think you can discern a definite aim in my life," I replied.

I got up and began to walk about the room, restless with the faint apprehensive excitement that fills the heart upon dark August afternoons: a premonition of storm, of passion, of war, one likes to imagine it; as a rule it is the premonition of nothing at all.

"Oh, you do not understand me," I cried, "if you think I understand myself whither I am bound! I make certain of my actions, converge towards a point, because—perhaps because"—I smiled—"when one has chosen a career it is usual to follow it. At intervals I terminate in marble, but that is all you can say of

me. As a man, not as sculptor, who am I? What am I?"

I stood at the foot of Madame du Merry's couch and looked at her. "And what are you?" I thought; "a ghost I meet when the mood for ghosts is upon me. I shall talk to you a while and then go away. I shall meet you again and yet again, always in the same place at the same hour in the same mood, as one meets a phantom!"

"What am I? Who?" I cried again to conceal my thoughts; and, as if in despair of receiving an answer, walked away from this ghost over to a dark corner where stood a gold lacquered cabinet. I stared at the cabinet and wondered what was in it. Letters perhaps from a great many people, and souvenirs of men. Ah, women, I thought, what divine fools they are! They imprison memories of us in gold cabinets!

I knew that Madame du Merry was watching me. She is far too accomplished a woman not to watch a man when he expects her to be doing so. She is also far too accomplished to address him at the wrong moment. I think I visit her because she understands her part in the complete farce. Now I was to cry out something. A second more and the silence would become inelegant. I hurled my voice into the middle of the note.

"Oh, Infinite To-day!" I ejaculated, and turned sharply round. "Who possesses it? I waste my life in to-morrow—a time that never comes. I am a dream, a fantasy, an imagination, a thing that might be but is not!"

"And do you so anxiously care to exist that your detachment from affairs gives you passionate sorrow?" she asked.

"I crave to be flesh and blood," I answered. "I



long to be a distinct personality, to act a part in the material world."

I stood at the foot of her *recâmier* again and looked Madame du Merry full in the eyes. I spoke with dramatic seriousness.

"Once," I said, "one short time, I did exist. By force of will I extricated myself from the future, and lived."

"And what followed?"

"What should have followed?" I expostulated. "I possessed the immediate and therefore the infinite."

Madame du Merry smiled.

"And when you tired of the immediate?"

"I did not tire of it," I said roughly. "My will to hold myself on that pinnacle of time became exhausted, and I fell off. My desire remained intact."

"And was reality so real?"

"Of that I am not competent to judge."

"All experience is comparative," said Madame du Merry, and put out her hands to me.

"That is the damnable truth," I murmured, and went up to her. Her thin white hands fluttered into mine. I bent and kissed them.

"Yes, unless one is an animal or an imbecile," she answered, and made me sit down near her. "You are very simple, Alphonse," she said, "and very innocent. Your experiments entrance me. What befell you after you had slipped from time?"

"Nothing," I replied; "I became once more a dream."

Silence of a measured duration and distinct quality was permitted us again, according to the rules of our Muse. I made the most of it to examine the delicate shadows of Madame du Merry's thin, transparent face, to take note of her long, graceful limbs veiled in blue embroidered draperies, while she drew a phrase from the distaff of her thoughts.

“ Dans cette localité il y a de l’avenir et de la passé,” she said mournfully, and turned her sad, prescribed smile upon me ; “ and therefore what can you or I be, Alphonse, but a dream ? ”

“ Since you declare the truth,” I answered, as if she had decreed my destiny, “ I must accommodate myself to remain a dream, to pass through the years a ghost. I shall flit to and fro, flounder, become enmeshed in something, free myself perhaps from nothing, and hunt tangibility in fits and starts. I shall continue elusive, aerial ; I shall wax and wane ; coagulate, melt, solidify, evaporate, and, terrible thought, when the Sentry at the uttermost gates cries out upon me, “ Qui vive ! ” I shall still return him my old ignorant answer, “ Je ne sais pas ! ”

“ What else is possible ! ” asked Madame du Merry softly, and the vaporous conversation was at an end.

#### CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

*January 16*

Well, Girrard, you accuse me of being a weathercock. So I am. If I were not I should never learn the nature of the winds. I point not only to the North, South, East, and West, but to all those mysterious nautical regions which lie between. You have only four points to your compass. I have thirty-two.

Now I have completely defended weather-cock-ality. There is no necessity to say anything more for it, but that it holds the highest possible fixed situation in the world and the most secure, for a weather-cock needs a whole edifice to support it, and that which it is invited most often to grace is, as your eyes may assure you, a House of God.

Therefore the weathercock is not such a vain bird, antique Girrard, and you may record a pun against my name in your book of Impossible Sins.

*January 19, 1921*

#### ONE OF THE ELECT

"I am an artist—that is, I am better than other men."

That was Edouard Gramont's creed. He said long ago, before he had the right to say anything, "I am an artist," and thought himself set apart like a Flamen of Jupiter for a higher service than the rest of men. He had left home and the world—that is to say, ordinary people—when he was eighteen, knew nothing except how to imitate other folk, and was at heart simple and without malice. At twenty-seven he was a pessimist in the conventional manner of the Quarter, and had learned from some of his associates to scorn the world he thought he had forsaken. The world was his enemy, but an enemy he did not debase himself to fight. He hated it in a cheerful, wordy manner, because it had money, because it did not pay Genius for the honour of its company; but his hate was formal, conventional, like his pessimism. He never supposed in his soul that mankind owed him any compensation for the accident of his birth.

Because his friends did so, he took drugs and talked of "ending it all," but never fixed a rendezvous with Death. Sometimes he was miserable and lonely, but not as often as his absolute poverty might have led one to suppose. He had an iron constitution, and like most strong men who devote themselves to a career that makes little demand upon their physical energy, he was lazy. He had not sufficient brains to supply thoughts for more than two hours of the week, and as

early in life he had settled the affairs of his universe, and had no personal matters beyond debts which he refused to think about, to engage his consideration, he passed, upon the whole, a dormant existence. In summer he was content to sit in the sun all day long with his mind a perfect blank, and would have slept the winter out against a stove or in a hearth corner if he could have come by such contrivances. On those rare occasions when he got together canvas and brushes after assiduous borrowing, if his energy were not exhausted by these labours he would paint something in Picasso's manner; but if his inspiration waned before he soiled the canvas, he would pay a visit with it to the pawnshop, and not forget to let his friends' brushes and colours share the pleasure of accompanying it.

When the mood was on him, in the winter time, he could imitate Picasso fairly successfully. He had a wonderful opinion of Picasso. "He is the man," he would say, "above all, who understands the subtlety of the angle; the only painter whose rhythms extend beyond the moment, the only modern whose honour is intact." Nothing pleased him more than to be told that "he played the same cornet" as Picasso, and after perpetrating a nature morte closely allied to one of the masters he would swagger for a month. The things sometimes sold. Pezetzki passed them off on Steinman of the Rue St. Honoré for a commission, and Steinman, though I know he never believed Pezetzki's lies for a moment, sometimes had the courage to murmur "Picasso" when certain of his American patrons cast an eye upon them. Pezetzki always removed Gramont's signature, it is not a name that glitters, but he was not often called upon to render him this service, for the Muse was chary of soiling her white feet in Gramont's dirty den.

One bright January morning I met him in the

gilded magnificence of the Louvre. I found him in the Salle des Etats staring at Manet's "Olympia." He stood up, I suppose because there was not a place vacant on the plush settees, and it was more than his reputation was worth to sit admiring the genius of Italy. He was as usual very much the worse for art, poor soul, and gave me the impression of a woodlouse out of a fable, buttoned up into a greenish-brown suit that did not fit. I had not been in the gallery two minutes before he turned round and raised his hat to me, a worldly hat, bloated with misuse into a most unworldly shape. He came over to me, and his feet in spats and another man's shoes looked exactly like the feet that caricaturists give to insects. Though no part of him was exposed I perceived at once that he could boast neither socks nor underclothes. His pale, round face, in three days' need of a razor, was as sad as dough, and did not even liven up when he jerked his arms into the air and cried "Pooh!" by way of a greeting.

We shook hands and, staring me straight in the eyes, he muttered: "Pah! look at all this. It makes me sick. Until Picasso, there has not been what you might call an artist since the Primitive! Look at that Manet!" He swung round and dabbled his pale hands in the air. "He tried to break away—he tried—he tried! I see the struggle in every stroke of his brush. As for the rest, by Bacchus, what a crew! Delacroix had all the indecencies of realism"—which perhaps is not a false criticism.

Gramont had a soft, throaty voice.

He did not give me an opportunity of expressing my opinions, but leaning close to me whispered hoarsely:

"Marichaud, I must speak to you; I must get off my chest the weight of an obligation I feel towards you."



"An obligation to ask for a loan," I thought, but I did not feel cynical. It was such a fine day that I could not feel cynical; moreover, my thought, which was natural and not unkind, made it essential for me to put myself at Gramont's service.

"Let us get out of here," I said.

"As you like," he answered. We hurried out into the Grand Gallerie like two little figures in a fairy palace, and after traversing three or four superb apartments hung with the whole history of beauty, we emerged above the blank stone Escalier Daru, where the winged Victory presides like an angel who has succumbed to a wicked enchanter.

"These unfinished pillars! These long, bare steps!" cried Gramont savagely, "this honesty and then that degeneracy of guilt."

We descended the steps and echoed along the tessellated pavement between an avenue of bronze figures and sarcophago to the entrance.

Outside the sun was shining, the air was fresh, Gramont shivered. The Louvre was his winter quarters; steam heat provided for nothing was an attraction in spite of the decadence it warmed. It was impossible to expose him to the rigours of a January morning, therefore I hailed a taxi and we drove to the Café de la Paix. Gramont adopted a superior attitude and stepped out of the taxi on to the crowded pavement with comic condescension. I admired him. Though an intimate companion of hunger he had the courage to condescend.

"Inside or out?" I asked him.

"Out," said Gramont, who must have longed for the snug interior. Accordingly we pushed our way between the people at the tables to a sheltered sunny corner. It was close upon eleven o'clock. We sat down, and Gramont surveyed the people before us

disdainfully, stolid, ugly, prosperous people, mostly in black.

"All this!" he cried and shrugged his shoulders. "Vulgar, dense, ignorant flesh!"

In truth, the tables were, as Jerome would say, "Concombrées de femmes grasses!"

It was a brilliant morning, a real January day with warm sun and keen air, a perfect morning on which to sit in a sheltered corner and drink hot chocolate, that is, if one had a greatcoat. Gramont was heroic; he was obliged to sniff because he had no handkerchief, but he kept his teeth from chattering. What was I to do? Send a waiter across the street to buy him an overcoat at the Gagne Petit? A man's pride is more sensitive than his body. Gramont would have permitted himself to borrow an overcoat and pawn it, but to accept one especially bought for him out of pity was impossible.

"Well," I said, when the hot chocolate and brioches were upon the table, "what obligation do you owe me?"

"The obligation," he replied without a moment's hesitation, "to tell you that I am sorry for you." He folded his arms upon his breast and crossed his legs. It fosters the animal heat.

"Why?" I asked.

"You have ideas, Marichaud," he said, as if he were conferring a favour, "but—your work is tinged, tainted, with this!" He waved his left hand rapidly in the air and tucked it under his arm again. At close quarters he smelt faintly of drugs—chloral, I think.

"Do you know James Sheepshanks?" he whispered suddenly, before I could defend myself. "This is confidential. He has taken my affairs in hand. He knows a millionaire; something may come of it. He got one of Pezetzki's fakes off on to him for four

thousand. One has to live. I want to begin my big picture, but the stark truth is I cannot lay my hands on a sous for the canvas. He may induce him to comission it. If not," he added carelessly, "perhaps you will loan me something in advance—the thing to be yours of course. It will take me five weeks. I shall put myself into it."

In some walks of life it may be correct to reply to such an inquiry, "My dear fellow, impossible!" but artists are more communal than Freemasons in the matter of money. If one has the cash one lends it; if not, one lends somebody else's.

"Could you oblige me with fifty?" he asked, preserving a splendid unconcern as to my answer.

"By all means," I replied.

"I must be frank: I hate your work," he went on.

"What of that? Each man to his own point of view," I cried.

"Money!" ejaculated Gramont. "To think that Art depends on money! It is a terrible charge to hurl at the head of mankind. To think that we must buy, BUY, canvas, brushes, colour! Pooh! It staggers me. If I can get that picture set up, James S. will have an easier time with his millionaire. *Le pauvre Pattes de Mouton!* Money disgusts me. I hate associating with it. Would it be possible to lend me a hundred? I am at the turning point of my career."

"With all the will in the world," I replied; "repay me at your leisure."

It is not etiquette to make a gift on these occasions. I should have laid myself open to a thousand suspicions.

"Thanks!" said Gramont. "Do you ever look in at the Rotonde?"

"Sometimes."

"It is a stuffy hole. It is our head-quarters. It

suits me better than this. This is Paris prostituted. It is not often I come over to the north side. The Grands Magazins, those gilt brothels they call Hotels, these cafés give me an absolute shock. It alarms me to think of the savages who frequent them. They say one can pay a hundred francs for a dinner, yet they grudge fifty to the sweat of a poor devil's brush. Mari-chaud," he growled, leaning sideways to me, and I thought he was about to pour forth a jeremiad against my wealth, "do you know Auguste Verne?"

"Who does not?" I asked.

"Art is a dark mystery," he murmured. "I attempt expression. Why? Expression is disease. Auguste has a powerful intellect. He has the courage to do nothing. How does he live? I can't make him out. He is rightly called 'Le Myth Verne.' If I could lay my hands on fifteen hundred a year I'd give up all this and live as he does. That's the only life for an artist."

The hot chocolate was stimulating Gramont. I offered him another cup.

"No, thanks" he said; "I shall be sick. I am not used to anything before evening."

I called for the bill and, to cover up the fact that our snack had cost us twelve francs, took out a note for a hundred and pushed it over to Gramont as I gave the waiter twenty. With a stumpy pencil Gramont wrote me out an I O U on the back of a dirty bill, and with great care folded up the note in another scrap of soiled paper. I looked away while he put it in an inner breast pocket. I was afraid of seeing his bare breast. If I had actually witnessed that he really did possess no shirt, I should have committed the unpardonable error of giving him my note-case. As it was, I began to think out some stratagem that might save his pride and ease me of fifteen hundred francs. Before I

came upon any solution of this problem Gramont got up. He must leave me now. He had an appointment with a friend. Probably the money burned against his heart and he was eager to interview it in private.

We shook hands cheerfully. Gramont was aching to rid himself of me. There was a look of preoccupation on his face as he paid me all the usual compliments of parting. He went and I sat down again in my corner. I felt as conscience-stricken as if I had forgotten to pay a very poor man for an incalculable service.

From that day to this I have never met Gramont, nor shall I ever do so again. About a week after our meeting he was found dead in a sarcophagus at the Louvre. The doctors and the police reconstructed his last moments. It appeared that upon the day of his demise he had partaken of a hearty meal with wine. The bill for it and seven francs thirty centimes was found upon him. Death was due to chloral taken indiscreetly while under the influence of drink. I remembered afterwards what kindly glances he had cast upon these couches of the dead as we had hurried out of the Louvre together on that bright clear morning, a thing which I did not notice at the time. Probably his last night within one had not been his first ; probably he found his tenancy so free from worldly embarrassments, so exactly suited to his requirements, that he determined indefinitely to extend it, and made himself master of eternal repose with an overdose of his favourite panacea.

CHEZ DELAROCHE

*January 27, 1921*

You declare, Marguerite, I waste my time on trifles.



Excellent ! The man who builds cathedrals has made a doll's house. If you can swear that my doll's house is really acceptable to mesdameoiseaux and mesdemoiselles les poupées, I can swear that I am really a genius, provided always that my cathedrals accommodate the Deity as comfortably as my maisonette accommodates the dolls.

Here am I in Delaroche's great dark study. On a table in the gloom of the bookcases stands a complete set of my comic "Characters of the Modern Theatre" executed for me at Sévres by my friend Jean Michelet. I am very proud of them, although the tallest is not six inches high. With the public they have been an immense success. Ha ! What a feat ! I am delighted I have pleased the public, but you think I have disgraced myself, and sit in a haughty upper window with your eyes averted. Michael despised David because he danced in the presence of the people ; you despise me because I have cut an artistic caper. I enjoyed myself in the exercise and shall caper again if the mood takes me.

Your attitude displeases me, Marguerite. My love for you gives me the privilege of informing you of the fact. If I did not love you I should not have the right to scold you ; and if Delaroche had not been called into his wife's apartments I should not have had this opportunity of exercising my privilege. I hear his stern elegant tread in the corridor, therefore I cannot protract this lecture to an unreasonable length. Remember this text, however. Have it printed in gold and hang it up in your bedroom :

Let him who can catch a minnow with a whale  
Catch a whale with a minnow.

The door opens as I hurriedly concoct this aphorism and you are saved any further absurdities on my part

by the entry of Delaroche in his perfectly cut clothes.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAMES DES CHAMPS

*February 3, 1921*

Three Tulips stand in my window in a green vase, Marguerite, three pale-pink tulips, delicate as mother-of-pearl, and their broad green leaves, susceptible to every subtlety of the grey afternoon light, curl outward and down the sides of the vase in perfect rhythm. Is love ever as beautiful as the opaque transparency of these tulip petals, grey as the wings of a dove where the shadows fall, white as a cloud in the evening sunshine where they catch the light? They seem as delicate, strong, and transparent as your white fingers are to my touch when I slide my fingers between them and feel the bones under the soft skin. There is enough loveliness in your fingers to make all the flowers in the world, enough strength in them to bind all men's hearts to you, and their transparency is an assurance of happiness, like the transparency of the rainbow.

The tips of your fingers touch the tips of mine. Why is there such ecstasy in the kissing of finger-tips? Now we slide them together, and our hands interlaced, grip and sway in a love-storm of their own. Soon, Marguerite, we shall be overcome, vanquished by our hands, but before I am annihilated I wish to understand why the tulips changed into your hands, and why your finger-tips hurl me into oblivion. Why! Why! Why! I feel myself upon the very brink of understanding, and then to my annoyance sink back again into a fool writing a foolish letter.

## CAFÉ DE LA ROTONDE

*February 8, 1921*

Marguerite, I am sitting in the sun outside the Café de la Rotonde. The sky is blue and white, a white wind hurtles along the street, trams rattle past and people go to and fro, but the Boulevard Montparnasse is as blank and stupid as usual. People emerge from the Vavain subway, people I do not know; men go into the café, men with whom I am familiar but have no part. Wentworth Royce nods his Chinese face at me and slouches silently in through the swing-doors. He must have been a handsome man before he sold himself to the devil. The devil taught him poker and left him to shift on that and a pile of verse no publisher will accept. They say he was once of his own choice a Mexican bravo and fought against his native country with a rose behind his ear. I bid Teddy Macdonald good morning, another lost American as cheerful as a little fighting cock. He skips gaily into the café as if he belongs to somebody there, as if he is somebody's dog and has no concern for what manner of place it may be; and yet I believe he carries a revolver and has an awkward conscience. Here comes Monsieur Albert Decauville, dirty and old, got up like Anatole France's Choulette, in a long, greasy cloak and a sombrero. He affects even the traditional knobbed stick, but has done nothing to warrant his eccentricities, or his second-hand assumption of the ghost of Verlaine. In there he will order coffee for three and sit down with two young women, one beside him, and one upon his knee; and then he will talk in a very high-minded fashion about the virtues.

Renaudot greets me. He likes to believe that he is descended from the Founder of the "Gazette de

France." Beauvais greets me. He declares that Dionysius invades the souls of men and women every March. He is looked upon as old-fashioned by some ; by others he is used as an antidote to Da-Da-ism. Du Clos, who has a private income, speaks to me.

"As usual, Alphonse, on the outside of Heaven," he says.

"As usual," I reply dryly, and he laughs and leaves me.

Du Clos tries to infer that he and I are equals among inferiors. He is one of those unpleasant people who insinuate that they despise their associates. He does not like me, because, before all things, he is too mean to like a successful man. The rest of the Parnassians do not like me, not because they are jealous of me, but because a man who works and has money is, in a curious way, taboo for them. They disdain me a little, I think, and fear me. Poverty is a proud, shy beast when he sojourns among people who refuse to degrade art into labour.

It is still only eleven o'clock, and many of the elect have not yet turned up to sit in the stale atmosphere of the Limbo Parnasse until six o'clock, which is the divine dinner-hour.

After a while Yakov of the twisted legs hobbles up the street on two sticks, the same sticks, it is said, on which he hobbled out of Siberia ten years ago. Nobody knows how he subsists. The Russians of the Rotonde, there is some half score of them, live communally on secret wages. Every one of them has Jew's blood in his body. They come and go mysteriously ; even Yakov has his new moons when he does not show his face ; they keep close company with one another, and seem conscious of a superiority over the rest of the café inmates ; and perhaps they are justified, for two of their number who no longer visit here

have overthrown the Autocrat of all the Russias. It is a fact, Marguerite, that Lenin and Trotski sat silent in the café behind me for many months' waiting for the world to accommodate itself to their designs. Well, now they rule an empire of beggars, and I sit outside their old head-quarters watching the sunlight cast a radiant orange shadow on the marble table through my glass of syrup, while old Jean, the waiter, flounces out for my six sous. He cares nothing whether he serves Whistler or Lenin or Marichaud or the Devil, so long as we are able to fork out the money for our Consommations according to the printed tariff.

CAFÉ VOLTAIRE  
*February 12, 1921*

I am in love with words. I am bewitched, Girrard, by the medium in which you work. At my trade I sacrifice everything to a final impression; at yours you can employ the whole universe in the creation of a chemise.

"In her chemise, my mistress seemed to me Diana gone a-hunting, veiled in a diaphanous tunic of pale morning mist. I worshipped her proud chastity, her remote completeness from myself, her amazonian, careless virginity, and my heart burned for conquest, as the heart of Cortez burned upon the threshold of Montezuma's empire. To-night when the forests sink dark under the Cynthian ghost of her purity, I shall recapture and subdue the passionate world within her, and know again the rapture of yesterday's dominion that this morning seems as distant as a young man's dream of earthly paradise."

There, that is not so bad; the truth somewhat gorgeously arrayed, but nevertheless the truth.



I envy you your genius, Girrard. I must come and sit in your study again and enjoy the sensation of proximity to a man who can not only command himself, but the whole appreciated universe, who can ring a tune upon a wineglass or waken a symphony upon the orchestra of the spheres.

In your magnificent simplicity I am regenerated ; the best in me is perfected. You have the power, the sublime capacity, to make the worst man feel the God in himself, which no other human being ever possessed in such perfection, save one—the man I most admire of all who ever lived, the man who means more to me than myself, more to me than my art, almost more to me than the blue sky : my hero, Johan Sebastian Bach.

Q/BIS NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*February 19, 1921*

Ha—ha—ha ! Girrard. What now of the future ? you croaking scrannel-throated spawn of poverty ! You dirty dog ! You squinting ray of a tallow candle seen through a cracked door ! You threadbare unmatchable patch on the buttocks of a Jew ! You will be starving in June, Girrard, and then perhaps you won't be so stiff about sharing Marichaud's ill-gotten louis d'or, pieces of eight, rix-dollars, dubloons, ducats, sublime sequins, celestial cash, centimes, sixpences, sous, pfennigs, pennies, copecks, farthings, francs, pesetas, guineas, groats, guilders, or whatever other multitudinous and unremembered tokens there may exist of the joy of Cræsus.

Without even having taken the vow of St. Francis you possess nothing. Holy Mary of the Blessed Poor, you have the sin of pride, sir. You are also a coward. You dare not be "in the receipt of charity," lest

they point the finger at you and whisper " Beggar ! Tout ! Toady ! Second-hand man ! Jackal ! Rokeby Pensioner ! "

If I could emulate the prowess of Rabelais I'd pitch into you and tumble the unsufferable stuffing of pride out of your belly into the pigsty where it belongs. You man of straw ! you sheaf of threshed-out barley ! you have the bowels of a clover-winded sheep. The time has gone by, my dear soul, for the snobbery of poverty, and the martyrs of the high stomach of injured pride are no longer in fashion. And this is true, sir :

Better honestly to accept an honest man's gift  
Than to sneak into his house in hope of a dinner.

And one or t'other of these actions, I regret to say, knowing your state and in face of your last rather repulsive letter, is about to become your necessity.

Reconsider in the name of friendship the arrangement I suggested to you at Christmas, and do not be like the proud ass who died in a green meadow because he would not bend his head. If you threaten to follow that estimable example I shall be conduced to commit suicide, in order that you may inherit under my will what I would much rather see you enjoy in my lifetime. I shall, my dear friend Jean, be constrained to make away with myself in order to preserve the life of a better man without deranging the niceness of his honour.

*February 23, 1921*

LINES WRITTEN AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF A FORT-  
NIGHT'S ILLNESS

I feel ill. The very thought of the monsters in my workshop produces a nightmare in which they loom and swell, dwindle, loom and swell again. My own

hands are the size of a mattress and weigh me down as I cringe before hideous primitive deities. Tepeyollotli ! Mictlanteculti ! I regret that I ever studied primitive culture, that I ever made a figure of stone, that I ever went out to dinner at Briand's on Tuesday. My delinquencies towards my friends rise up in a cloud of ravens, and I remember that I have not returned Briand's umbrella to him, which I borrowed on the night I caught this chill. He had no telephone and I had no overshoes—oh, tangle of wires and dark roof-tops and goloshes !—and I got wet wading after a cab in the pouring rain of midnight. I had sat in an abominable draught at dinner and suffered afterwards from stomach-ache, brought on by something in the cookery I dislike—herbs in the rissoles. Horrible things are rissoles ; old, tired meat astringent with sage and tough with half-cooked onion—at any rate at Briand's. His is one of those peculiar houses where the food never satisfies and the fire never warms ; yet he is a nice chap. I think his wife is the source of that inhospitality ; she is turned sour. She belongs to the clever folk, irks Briand and freezes me, and has ruined his digestion.

Here Petrushka brings me hot chocolate, draws the curtains close against the rattle of the wind, and makes up the fire.

“ Monsieur m'ézsembleu malad.”

Petrushka's solicitude makes me feel worse. I drink my hot chocolate, smoke a foul cigarette, and tell him to let no one in to see me on pain of damnation, unless Marguerite Fleury drop from heaven on to the doorstep.

It is a little solitary, he thinks, for me ; shall he take a hand at cards or dominoes ? He played the other evening again at his old house of call, Lionvilles café-bar, and won five francs.

“ My good lad,” I groan, “ do you want the black eyes of dominoes to haunt me all night ? Do you want me to suffer the tyranny of that shrew, the Queen of Diamonds, through the thousand hours of a wakeful delirium ? No ! Rather go and get me some of my favourite grapes and a pineapple at old Dufour’s, brew me soups, with the help of the concierge’s female whelp if necessary, and do not let me hear the words meat, cards, or visitors for a century.”

He goes, and soothed by the hot drink I draw the quilt up to my ears and dream more comfortably. The lazy fire flickers, black shadows dance a parade across the ceiling, and there is not a disturbing breath of air anywhere. I begin to think of warm climates and plan a journey to Spain for next year ; not to Madrid ; it is cold and draughty there, I understand, with a beastly dust-wind from the Sierras which induces catarrh ; but to Grenada where I can lie in the embroidered courts of Alhambra and bake myself in the sun.

As is the fashion of dreams, the future becomes the present, and I enact memories of the never-has-been. I roost like a black Spanish fowl under the fairy colonnades of the Patio de la Alberca and feel the warmth of the marble pavement generously permeate my nether limbs. The hot painted tiles glow against my back, myrtle and orange trees flutter around me, and I am supremely content, content to do nothing but watch the goldfish dart among the reflections of delicate traceries and slender white columns in the blue heaven of the pond. Idlers lounge under the fretted doorways, but none are so abandoned to repose, so sunk in lotus lassitude as I.

Towards noon I wander away down into the town to a Spanish café for dinner, where I eat a small portion of chicken and a few bits of cheese, and sip a little

wine. An hour later I return to the Alhambra park with fruit and tobacco and a book of Spanish pictures, and disappear with these under the elm-trees until the nightingales and cicadas begin to serenade the jalousies of heaven.

Then I brush about among the orange thickets a while, and see through the dark graceful branches, Alhambra shining rosy as a magic citadel. I should like to strip off my clothes, twine myself a wreath of orange blossoms, and haunt these woods as a satyr. Alas! though I have a goatlike pelt down my thighs, my feet are perfectly human, and the modern gendarmerie of Grenada would find no place for my assumption of mythological freedom but in the madhouse. I yawn like a bored cat at the separation civilization has placed between me and many happinesses.

Here distinctly is the time and place to digress into a philosophical monody. The sun has set, and earthly colours are beginning to fade as the luminous sky of day draws to the west and reveals the starry abyss of darkness. I might take the Past for my theme, or mortal transiency, or departed glory, but all these are worn thin by sentimentalists and theologians. The cool of evening fans my face, and from the woods uprise incense and earthy odours. I lean against a twisted orange-tree, and draw down a hanging branch bearing round green fruit, and young, tender, shining leaves and waxen flowers. I feel the texture of each, and smell the white over-scented buds. The perfume cloy, and as I let go the branch the leaves patter against one another and brush my cheek with a flutter of thin cold wings.

I shall die of imagination unless one day I retire into the country and teach myself to think at a snail's pace. Only in the concentration of work can I at



present find refuge from the overwhelming hoards of vain images which tumble into my mind, and that very concentration so tires my powers of selection that when I quit working I am powerless to bid thought come and go, and fall prey to the whole external world and the seven deadly emotions.

I am ill, thought sickens and decays luminously into dreams, dreams multiply and tangle, shift and shake into nightmare. The bed rises like an enemy against me, the pillows harden, and when I open my eyes the dancing edge of the shadows on the ceiling cuts into my brain. I wish Marguerite were here. All my absurd theories against marriage disclose themselves as sins against the law of Nature. I am a sinner and repent the actions of my health with maudlin sighs. Oh, for kind hands and the devotion of a smile I love ! But I am ill in Paris and Marguerite is far away at Fiesole.

As Jerome says : " The best things dwell beyond the mountains."

Yes, beyond that black ragged ridge across the ceiling. It shuffles as I have seen the Alps do in sheet-lightning. Silence drags through the room like a hearse, rain flutters against the window-panes, and the brocade curtains breathe as if a human heart lay beneath them. Oh, Time ! Sick men are thrown to time for torture. Each instant of the night is drawn out to the point of breaking, and I am become simply an extremely delicate instrument for recording the vibrations of sound.

I hear footsteps. My heart beats loudly. Who may this be softly padding towards my door ? Is the miraculous about to happen ? Is it she ? Is it Marguerite ? Will the door open like the gate of heaven to admit my love ? Nonsense ! It can only be Petrushka with the grapes. I must not excite

myself to a bitter disappointment. It can only be Petrushka.

And so it is.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAMES DES CHAMPS

*February 27, 1921*

It is midnight, Marguerite ; I am lying in bed ill and unable to sleep, therefore I fancy myself many things I am not and have a wish to be a Russian. I have been reading Tchekoff's "Black Monk." What a garden ! Fruit trees in blossom and tulips ; later in the year peaches and fields of yellow corn. I wish I had had Tchekoff's opportunities, without his affliction of course. What a pity Tchertkoff's Russia no longer exists ! I like it ; it is pleasant, human, and foolish, and though these tales are full of depressing events they never depress me. Tchekoff wrote in the atmosphere of a coming millennium. I wonder if I believe in the millennium. Yes, certainly all my actions betray that I do, all my thoughts are coloured with the expectancy of it. Cynical persons will say that I live in the glow of wealth and success. Many equally rich and successful men bite their lips in the bitterness of their thoughts and call the world a cankerous growth. I think I should be happy in any circumstances, and that I would even find pleasure and interest in watching the glories of this world pass away. So I think, but it is midnight, and I am as far away from human life as if I were afflicted with a mortal illness.

*March 12, 1921*

#### THE INVALID

Delaroche is bound to an invalid wife. Ever since their dead child was born she has lain in bed and been

cut off from all normal participation in his life ; she has become an island in the middle of a river, and by no means an insignificant one.

Her room is the best in their large flat—it used, in fact, to be the salon. Now it is still a salon, but with this difference, the grand piano has abdicated and retired into a corner and her bed presides over the room. She holds court from it several times a week and delights to give musical parties. Musicians cramp themselves at the ill-placed piano, quartets freeze upon the side of the room farthest from the fire, the singers choke themselves with the thick atmosphere redolent of Parma violets, Egyptian cigarettes, and iodoform. When you leave, the next acquaintance you meet sniffs you suspiciously, and wonders what infectious illness you have in your house, and people in the metro look at you angrily as if they suspected you of leprosy. But we all go to visit the invalid, not only to please her husband and to bring a little of the world to one who is cut off from it, but because the sight of a pretty woman lying in bed is romantic, and awakes the fool in us which used to cry over *La Dame aux Camélias*. Sometimes I find her alone, and then perhaps I am allowed to hold her delicate fingers and say a few foolish things that bring a frail scolding upon me. Romance creeps stealthily to the bottom of the bed, and we feel pleasantly embarrassed, especially if I call towards five o'clock on a spring evening to take tea with her, when twilight lingers at the window and a cheerful log-fire blazes on the hearth. The dim salon looms behind the white and silver bed in the shadow of eternity, and silence hangs in a faint silver mist under the painted ceiling. Softly up and down surge the myriad moth wings of time, and hearts languish towards one another, drawn by no stronger attraction than the hour ; hands interlace, a kiss is

given, her tender body in its soft thin garments is held close in strong, black-coated arms. I feel like a huge rough bear against her ; my utmost gentleness seems harsh, but she finds it reviving, and I, intoxicated by the contrast of strength and weakness, vow to become her devoted friend.

After an occasion of this sort I went away determined to send her fresh carnations every morning. I met Delaroche on the stairs and felt cold towards him, as one is apt to do towards a husband after a sentimental hour with his wife. He pressed me to come back with him for a few moments, and left me in his study to consider his return while he went to see the prisoner. There I remained, excited and uncomfortable. I did not want to be shut up in Delaroche's study. I sat down and fidgeted, got up and fidgeted, tried to read the "Gazette," tried to be interested in a book of engravings. I felt as if I were in a professional waiting-room where the books for some reason are all perfectly boring. The minutes went backwards, and my recent state of mind broke up into irritation and nervousness. I was not in any fear that Delaroche was preparing a tirade against me. I knew he had no particular care what his wife did or said within the narrow bounds imposed on her by Fate. Ach ! I just became disturbed like a cat in a thunderstorm, and knew suddenly that I had said more than I had the right to say to a sick woman, that I had raised her expectations in regard to myself on no better foundation than an overdose of sentimentality. I was extremely angry with the fool in me and wished only to get out of the house at the first possible moment.

Delaroche returned and I was forced to appear amiable and at ease.

"How do you find my wife ? " he asked.

"I think she progresses," I replied formally.

"Your visits give her immense pleasure," he went on.

Heavens! How much better than he did I understand the pleasure that my visits gave her. I wished she might conceive an unwavering dislike of me.

"She endures——" I began.

"Terrible," he murmured vaguely, and without any provocation added, "but she is a sensible woman; though her sick-room has become a shrine for small gifts, she does not desire human sacrifice."

Then he turned the conversation upon general topics.

At last I was in the street and able to review the whole affair. At four o'clock I had been at peace, happy to carry a few beautiful flowers to a friend; at five I was entranced; at six bored and in confusion. Certainly I had made a fool of myself. My idiotic speeches rang derisively in my ears: "Divine sympathy"—"Carry you to the moon." "You are too beautiful. . . ."

#### THE BOOKSHOP

I got into a taxi and drove off to Z.'s bookshop in the Rue St. Honoré. It was not yet shut. Steinman, the actual proprietor, was talking with Pezetzki in the brilliantly lighted interior. He nodded to me, and I went the round of the mahogany table where vellum-covered editions of poetry on hand-made paper were laid out in rows to seduce amateurs. The walls of the shop were also of a vellum shade, relieved with new works of art in bizarre frames hung between garlands of wooden fruit. The books on the table were monotonous "Hachis de Verlaine" and "Compôte Baudelaire," with coloured illustrations out of spirit with the text. I turned away from them and watched the dark forms of people in the lamplit street pass by the great uncurtained window. Some of them paused



to look at the wares set out for their attraction, or to stare into the shop at me and the two other men and the pretty girl who tied up parcels. And all the people who went by were as like one another as wolves in a pack. "No beautiful woman smiled on me that eve," but the shop-girls going past to their homes nudged one another and giggled against the glass on my behalf. I became tired of the ugly passers-by and began to listen to the Pezetzki-Steinman duologue. Certain pictures, it appeared, were to arrive from Russia in a week's time; six examples of the new life there, full of the most vivid imagination. No. 1—The finest thing of its kind ever seen; the execution of a criminal by summary mob justice; in the background a tram. No. 2—A street in Petrograd, with grass springing in the gutter. No. 3—A woman and a man quarrelling over a fish; and other subjects of extraordinary interest. The artist was an original; he could not write his name, but painted without ever a single lesson, direct from the truth.

Ah, Pezetzki! Pezetzki! You are a humorist, I thought. I had once accidentally come across him faking a wooden case with Russian postal marks. He was an expert forger, an expert liar; in fact, he never told the truth. Steinman received his lies with perfect diplomacy; there was always a risk, a very slight one, that the pictures Pezetzki traded were not this time painted in his cellar.

At last he went away and Steinman came over to me. He always treated me with a delicate familiarity and pretended to let me into his secrets. No doubt I had to pay for it, but he knew that I was the kind of man who likes to meet the human being in his book-seller and tailor and whom the professional manner does not flatter.

"That fellow is a bore," he said.

"Pezetzki?" I asked. "Yes, perhaps, but what I really require is a present for a lady." It suddenly occurred to me that I might send Madame Delaroche a book with an apology on the flyleaf and thus extricate myself from the entanglement I had fallen into.

"Here you are," he answered, and took up a large, mottled volume from a sofa covered with printed lemons. "For three hundred francs."

"That is too much."

"But not for you!" said Steinman sentimentally.

"Yes, but I came into your shop on a whim for a mere trifle."

"Is love a whim? Is woman a mere trifle?" he asked, and put the book down upon the table in a distant, melancholy manner.

"I never mentioned love," I said, seating myself on the be-lemoned sofa.

"Oh, la!" ejaculated Steinman, and went sadly over to the door, which he locked, partly because it was closing time, partly to flatter me. Then he came back, folded his arms on his breast, sat on the edge of the table, and stared at me. I offered him a cigarette, and we both smoked—he, in the fashion some men have, with his arms still folded.

"You look distressed. What's up?" he asked, in a brotherly fashion.

I felt inclined to tell this Jewish bookseller the truth. He was probably descended from David.

"A bit of assininity," I said. "Tell me, why do we ever outstep our feelings; why do our sentiments sometimes gallop down-hill while our hearts still perch at the top?"

"Because," he answered, "some of us have the fortune to be born more generous than our banking accounts. 'Cast your bread upon the waters and it will return to you after many days.'"

"Sodden and mouldy," I growled.

Steinman laughed.

"I'll show you something very beautiful," he cried ;  
"something for a connoisseur."

Oh flatterer ! Oh, Steinman !

He went over to a chest of drawers full of a thousand papers, and drew therefrom a thin flat volume in a blue and scarlet cover. He turned the pages for his own delight and smiled to himself before he handed it to me.

"I have but this copy," he said. "It contains the private thoughts of a certain person who is dead. A certain other person published them. Two days after the publication the family of the deceased bought the fount blocks and all copies—almost all the copies," he corrected himself. "It is illustrated. It is very comic, isn't it ?"

It was. I recognized caricatures, not in the best taste possibly, but infinitely humorous, of half Paris. On page fifty-seven I saw Delaroche, on page twelve myself.

"That's good," said Steinman, looking over my shoulder.

We both laughed. I was at Steinman's heart. I felt a pleasant sensation as if I were dispensing happiness. I felt I was actually making Steinman happy by sitting familiarly in his shop. Acquaintances such as he have one golden virtue ; they seem immune from the worries of this world. You meet them in new and expensive surroundings where not a sign of shabbiness, not a speck of dust offends the eye and suffer the hallucination that they are immortal and above the trivial embarrassments of existence. You feel refreshed and forget your dissatisfactions there in the perfectly ordered cosmos over which they preside. Their Olympus reminds one, in its immunity from human moth

and corruption, of the material heaven which all men dream of, where all things shall have this unchanging newness and order.

I became too kind to Steinman. I said on an impulse of affection :

“ You should leave pictures alone.”

“ Why ? ” he asked, a little offended. “ Don’t I sell good pictures, fashionable pictures, pictures which attract ? ”

“ Perhaps.”

“ You suspect Pezetzki——”

He spoke slowly, quietly, with the intonation of a diplomat asking a delicate question to which he already knows the delicate answer.

“ Place au diable ! ” I cried and got up. “ Wrap me up anything you choose to sell me ; I must not talk any more to-day.”

Steinman shrugged his shoulders. I felt contrite. I could see I had offended him, and for the second time that day felt an incredible fool.

“ My dear man,” I said conciliatingly, “ I was on the point of putting my foot in it for a second time to-day. It is I, not you, that should leave pictures alone. Forgive me.”

“ You hint—you insinuate that fool, Pezetzki——” he muttered.

“ For goodness’ sake do not permit me to muddle myself up with Pezetzki,” I cried. “ I know him ; frankly, I prefer not to mention him.”

“ You suggest I deceive——”

“ I suggest nothing,” I cried.

“ I have to take his word for it,” growled Steinman.

“ Naturally,” I said.

“ The public makes no complaint,” he went on. “ I don’t precisely understand you. You advance and retreat to my confusion. You must make out either

that Pezetzki is a liar or that I am dishonest. You suggest I am a fool. I think—I think I have discretion.”

“Certainly, in business,” I allowed. I myself was irritated now; my bookseller was overstepping the limits I had accorded him in my mind. I was snob enough to have imposed limits on his side of our acquaintanceship.

Steinman saw I was irritated and pulled himself up. I felt extraordinarily mean.

“Yes,” he said, in a subdued and dignified voice; “in business, yes. Alas! it is only too easy to confine discretion and other good conveniences to business.”

“Thank you,” I said, “I am extremely obliged to you;” and he understood me. “Now for heaven’s sake help me to extricate myself from this other affair.”

“Send her this little thing,” he said, picking up the book of caricatures again. “Women like something daring and a little—how shall I say?—crude perhaps.”

Better something crude than anything sentimental, I thought. Besides, Steinman was longing to confer the favour upon me of purveying this book to me. It was no doubt costly also, and I should, if I bought it, oblige him. I took up the book again, looked at the portrait of myself as a scarlet Hermes delivering billet-doux to four blue women. If Jeanne Delaroche had any humour this would mend the matter. I slipped in a card to mark the place, took out my fountain pen, and on the flyleaf wrote this simple dedication:

“From a Fool.”

I allowed Steinman to overlook me as I wrote, and when I had finished asked his approval.

“Bon voyage,” he said, and laughed. I gave him Jeanne Delaroche’s address, and we were reconciled.



He handed the book to the pretty girl and then looked me full in the eyes.

"If a picture is worth consideration," he asked, "is it of any moment by whose hand it came upon the canvas?"

"None," I said. "It is a curious morality that spies about for a signature. My statues would be as good by any other man."

"Ha, well, no!" laughed Steinman.

"Come, come," I said. "Admit it. You will give no offence."

"You catch me out," he smiled.

"Consistency?" I asked.

"A poor business woman," he replied.

"At other businesses than her own," I said. "Each to his own trade."

"Even Pezetzki?"

"Yes, God rest his soul, for the devil won't," I said; and we bid good night on the very best of terms.

"Singular," said Steinman, as he let me out of the door, "that the devil tortures us for obeying his behests."

*April 1, 1921*

#### BAD TEMPER

The day was neither wet nor fine, neither warm nor cold, and I knew the abomination of desolation. I was a man that had been spat out by life. My cigarette was tasteless, my works of art dead, and, extraordinary confession, I was not in love. Ah, well! well! well! I sat on a crate in my studio and stared at the wall. My body from the waist upward was constrained into a Picassian "Portrait of a Man." What man? Any man. Any man with a dead body hanging on to his heart and squeezing the life-blood out of it. I felt like a box that has had its contents

removed and has become misshapen. I braced myself into a gawky attitude of despair and imagined my eyes prominent and black-rimmed. There was a certain pleasure in this ; it was akin to creation. Acting, however, demands an audience, and the pleasure passed. I might have played to the President of the French Republic, or Our Lady, before whom I frequently did myself the honour of performing when I was a little boy, but there was not sufficient faith in me to conjure up a flea that morning. I had the energy of a jelly-fish and my head contained but one idea ; a vague awareness that it would be better if I went out to the chemist and bought myself some medicine ; but this I definitely intended not to do.

My man brought me a glass of coffee. I drank it, but it was meaningless. I drew myself up on to the edge of the crate like a gargoyle and allowed the hand of death to get a tighter grip on me. It would naturally have been better to have gone out into the negative morning, but I did not want to go out until I had definitely decided to remain where I was. Then immediately I got up. Perhaps if I bought two million Parma violets and strewed them on the studio floor I should be allowed to return into Life.

I wandered into my bedroom. The bed was made and the place was as tidy as if it had never been inhabited. I stood gazing at the bed as if I were looking down at my own tomb. Impossible that my tears had ever wet that pillow, that dreams of hell and heaven had ever flamed in that chaste silent alcove above it ; impossible that any living man had tossed and tumbled among those blankets in the heat of human joys and sorrows. I tried to conjure up philosophical ideas with these commonplaces as a basis, but the furniture and the pictures dominated me. I, even I, Marichaud the melancholy, had bought them. When ?

Why? No, no, the truth was they had elected to live in my house and had caused me to make the necessary arrangements. At any rate, there was no reason why any of them should ever be disturbed by my vagaries. I had none and the room seemed as permanent as a street.

I inspected myself in the mirror. Portrait of the Sculptor! Self-portrait perhaps. No, in that case I should have made him appear more reasonably like what I thought myself to be. This man had a cold spine and looked as if he could never sit down.

I took my hat and left the house. Outside the wind shivered the little leaves of the trees in the white air like a million electric sparks, and, although it was not really cold, my flesh crept, for the little hairs of my body bristled up as if to an electric stimulus.

I passed a red and blue advertisement, horrible in its symbolism, stuck upon a hoarding over the blind eye of a shop-front under repair. Unfortunately I read it.

VAINQUER DU MONDE—L'ESTOMAC !

VAINQUER DE L'ESTOMAC—Z——

I will keep the courageous secret, which confirmed me in my intention of not visiting the chemist's. Yet I felt that I was wilfully destroying my soul, throwing my hat over the housetops, letting pearls lie for want of sense to gather them. Soul, hat, or pearls were all one to me that morning.

I walked up to the corner of the Raspail and Mont Parnasse. There I stood for ten minutes gazing into the Café d'Italie at the confectionery and bakery, and I invited myself to the pleasure of a cup of chocolate which I did not accept. I moved away from the window and saw my ghost in the glass. There was no

more life in Marichaud that morning than in a cooked snail. There was my corpse under the shivering trees of the boulevard. There was my grey ghost in the window. He looked lonely and the cakes shone through him. Poor wretch!

We parted and I went slowly home again, like an invalid that repents of having left his bed. I went back into my hateful studio, and, sitting down upon the crate, again gave myself over to the mournful luxury of introspection.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS  
*April 15, 1921*

It snowed yesterday, Marguerite, hurriedly, unexpectedly. The hills of St. Cloud and Suresnes were white over for ten minutes. It awakened in me a sudden passion for the Alps, and I longed to be in some such spot as Val Tournaches, with the snow half melted in the meadows, and a warm south wind from the valley caressing me into a sentimental ecstasy of Spring. I dreamed that I felt youth tingle in my nerves; dreamed I was happy and saw violets and primroses upon the mountain slopes, and the blue sky through a lattice of cherry blossom. I became love-mad and ran to the top of a mountain in an instant to shout that I was happy.

My thirty years lie heavy upon me to-day, and only a drink from a clear mountain stream or the sweet smell of wet pastures can rejuvenate me. I am half inspired, Marguerite, to make a little set of figures, such as those you despise, upon the idea "Spring Among the Mountains", but I am too idle. I am tired through my desire to be upon the mountains of Savoy, and sulky because I have lost the magic carpet.

“ Sur tes cheveux noirs jettes un chapeau de paille ! ”  
but you are not here and we are not there, so my dream must pass as it came, and I must go into my studio and soil my hands with stinking clay, and pile up a monstrosity to sustain my reputation.

*April 22, 1921*

#### NEGRO-MANIA

Yesterday I went round to see Auguste Verne. He lives in an attic at the top of Numero X in the Rue du Bac. The little dormer window squints out towards the north, because the north light is essential to an artist even though he never paints. I firmly believe when I am with Verne that he created his attic, Paris, and the world, and that I am either an unborn spirit come on approval or a dead man visiting a world in which I was once the most important individual, and which is now in other hands. Yes, Marichaud, the great Marichaud, the man who dominates his contemporaries with his sense of life, takes second place in the Attic Vernois. Auguste Verne is not single ; he is two ; himself and his fat, boyish mistress with her cropped hair, crimson burnous, and straw slippers. They spend their life on a rickety carnation-coloured sofa, he lying down, she sitting at his feet sucking a long, ivory cigarette holder with an Egyptian cigarette in it. The sofa leans against the back of an upright piano draped with an African-pink back-cloth. The piano effectively shields the prostrate Verne from the crudity of the north light. It stands in the middle of the room. The top of it is heaped with Verne's toys ; a guitar for ever silent, a pile of illustrated art journals never read, a penny whistle that Rinaldo Gambetti sometimes plays to us when we gather round Verne's catafalque, a bust of Balzac after Rodin's statue,



crowned with a sere wreath of ivy, and a bottle, half empty, of Spanish claret, that will never be finished, for Verne has laid himself down in his last rest, and his mistress, who keeps his body from decay with viands from the nearest cookshop, has never seen that bottle nor half the objects in the room. The beauty of dust harmonizes everything. Age has brought together all the pinks and reds under the tarnish of decay. One thing alone defies it: upon the wall beyond the sofa head, to the left of the window, hangs a picture bright, new, and unselfconscious, in a red lacquer frame. We know the title of it is "Moi-même", we recognize it as a reflection of Verne's soul. We long on its account to turn the canvasses that lie against the walls but dare not. If we did so it would kill Verne as we know him. He would rouse himself, he would be angry. We should lose our immense, silent respect for him, his power over us would be gone; so we stare at the naked man in the picture with his face hidden in the branches of a plum-tree, and wish we, too, stood naked in that summer landscape with the arms of that tree laden with ripe plums lying heavily upon our shoulders.

We never ask, "Does Verne go to bed, can he walk, is he a victim of the tyrannies of Nature?" for he is a god, a myth, our totem, our African Wamba-Wamba Man. He is made of wood, his members and intestines are symbolical not functionary.

Yesterday, as I have said, I toiled up the stairs of Numero X to worship at the shrine of "Le Myth Verne." As I stood outside the green door the afternoon sun shone on my back, the golden April afternoon sun, and threw my shadow before me, a primitive backwood form of Dionysius—yes, Verne cast his influence through the door—revisiting his primitive father, with an offering of long-stemmed orange tulips. I did not knock. I opened the door and let in an

oblong piece of sunlight with my shadow in the middle of it. Now I was a German silhouette on orange paper.

"Stand still," murmured Verne.

He took a photograph of me in his mind. In the interval I saw that everything was as usual: the girl in her place on the sofa, one half by two-sevenths from Balzac, two-thirds from Verne's head. I should have been a painter. There was Verne's soul on the wall, frank as to nakedness, his face decently hidden in the plum-tree.

"Ah, well," said the recumbent figure on the sofa; and I knew the photograph was taken, never to be printed from; to be used, however, in some mysterious way as fuel for Verne's interior fire, a fire that burnt like a blast furnace seen at night from a distance glowing with the appearance of stability.

I came in, shut the door, and sat down on a wide stool covered with worn-out sherry-coloured brocade. It had leopard's legs. I was the Sphinx come to learn wisdom from her master.

"Flowers?" said Verne.

"All Paris is flowers," I answered and laid them beside him.

With a slow bite of his hand he removed the paper round them and let it flutter to the floor like a dying owl. He put the flowers on his stomach with their heads on his breast and stared into their mouths.

"Marichaud," he murmured, "you outside man. Tulips on the hills of Persia! Cold, pure smell. You burn erotic perfumes and cry Ah! Persia! You run to some musée and look at Huquas. Ah! Persia! You visit the purveyors of orientalism and wallow in sandal-odoured silks. Ah! Now truly—Persia! I and my tulips are Persia. Even though Europe has swollen them into blood oranges she has not tampered

with their smell. You outside man. The essence of imagination is right selection." He rolled his tulips into his left arm and hugged them like a baby. I saw him kiss them twelve or thirteen times. I also saw several pictures in my mind. Leduc sees similar pictures and paints them. It is easier to paint another man's pictures than one's own. Leduc has made an immense reputation in advanced circles with his renderings of Verne's unrealized works of art. If Verne died Leduc would go *put*! His "extraordinary range of vision" would collapse upon him in a week. Thank God I am a sculptor and Verne is only an asset to me, not an hypothesis of my creative genius.

"When you lie with a woman at night in silence dreaming"—I lay with a woman at night in silence dreaming. I saw the primitive curves of our bodies. I saw my hard eyes staring at the stars through the window—"the hills rear up around you, the warm night wind——"

I kissed her in a pure unsentimental valley of Lebanon. David's gold-pillared house stood in the forest. David loved Bethsheba the more for the wrong he had done on her account. The whole thing burst into a vision of Solomon's temple, a dream by Rembrandt. Then I saw a man clutching the horns of the altar and a huge golden priest above him, no longer in the manner of Rembrandt, but unreminiscent, new, wonderful—a picture by Verne. It is not marvellous that I visit Verne's attic. Verne spoke again :

"Barbier had decided to devote himself to wine-glasses and Chinese figures. He is baffled by his muddled mind."

I saw Barbier, with a lilac bush reflected in his painting mirror, delicately arranging flowers and venetian vases round a fat-bellied mandarin.

"They sell for two thousand francs apiece."

I saw the mandarin and his crockery hung in a shady salon with parquet floor, cool mirrors, and shining elm furniture.

Verne spoke with his imagination rather than with his tongue :

“ Lefanu has become a negro-maniac.”

“ So have I,” I replied, and looked at the idol extended on the sofa. Negroid art was the moment’s madness. I have it when I look at myself naked in the mirror, rarely more often ; it is another asset of mine.

“ Men who lose themselves in any distinct form are ruined unless they recollect the way home.”

I laughed, because I suddenly realized that Verne, like all gods, had this limitation. He could dominate, but not enter other men’s minds. He could overshadow me like a tree, he could not laugh or weep with me. He could take me into his mind as I was at any moment, he could impress me on another man, but he could not forsake himself or get out of himself and walk amongst me as I walked amongst him.

A man came in with a basket. He put the basket down on the floor and took out the contents, which he placed on the mat between us—chicken en casserole bread, salt, red wine, pommes pneumatiques, cheese, butter, marangues. He went away again, saying “ Bon soir.” None of us had moved.

“ Stay to supper,” droned Verne.

I knelt down in reply and shared out the food. Verne had perfected the art of eating off his stomach. We ate in silence and did not drink until the plates rose in a dirty tower from the floor. The chicken bones gave it the cant of the tower of Pisa.

I uncorked the wine. It seemed indelicate to make such lusty movements as the removal of a wine-cork

demanded. We drank slowly, rhythmically, in concert, although it was only *vin ordinaire*.

The tree that was Verne spread slowly over me again. I became without desires, inert and satisfied, and yet I felt refreshed, inert and refreshed like a love-contented man. I waited for the god to speak, my mind blank as a cinematograph screen ready to receive pictures.

"To look out of windows," said Verne, and I knew that he did not mean earthly windows. I saw a panorama north, south, east, and west simultaneously, and saw myself sitting in a room at the top of an eight-sided tower, a wind-tower, I thought.

"Magic," said Verne.

Yes, yes, the unknown came upon me. Something was almost clear to my comprehension. I expressed it in every line of my body as I sat on a green mound under a weeping ash-tree my arms loosely round a woman. She looked up into the tree, but I was looking inward, down into darkness. I neither kissed the woman nor cared to. I was incapable of action. I was a young handsome "seer."

"In the future," continued the man on the sofa, "simple——"

I heard no more. Alphonse Marichaud was in the future, his blustering life gone, his fierce, energetic, creative assaults upon clay and marble forgotten. He knew in idleness what he had failed to discover in work. I saw him standing in an Italian vineyard; his own vineyard. He was silent but a poet, he was motionless but an artist. The rocks upon the mountains in the distance were his masterpieces, hewn into superb figures by his mind. He possessed everything in his mind and had repented of the sin of realization. The June vine leaves, silvery with morning, made a hedge behind him. At his feet sat his wife nursing



their child. I smiled, contented to sit inactive for ever. I held this man within me and all that he contained. It did not strike me that I was an attitudinizer before my own vanity ; the man with the plum-tree in another pose.

Paul le Gros came in and sat down upon the floor, and almost immediately afterwards without a word I went. I went down to the Seine in a dream and leaned upon the parapet. Oh, the granite of that parapet ! Granite walls of a black river, granite god of the swamps of Congo ! granite, wood, water. Primitive forces. A vineyard, the progress of life, frenzied attempts to create, then silence. All within ! I wanted a woman for the flesh and for the begetting of flesh. I struck the parapet with my hand and felt immense, huge, fleshly. Oh, Animal Immortality ! Heavy with physical love I dragged myself away from the river and went to see Barbier. I must show myself to somebody with my bull-like shoulders, my impassive thick face, my attributes of fecund divinity ; why not to the simple Barbier in his thin, grey studio ? His bronze tulips and mauve anemones would emphasize me, and the huge animal I had become would loom more huge amongst his venetian glass.

Barbier sat dreaming in his studio. In his hand he held a slight blue book called "Nouveau-né." He raised his grey eyes as I entered, but the expression of his quiet face remained unchanged. Barbier sighed, and I knew that he saw in me nothing but the same indefatigable, strenuous Marichaud, the man who blows his friends about like a wind. To-night, however, I knew that that was changed, that within I was a granite bull. Barbier need have no fear the winds were locked in primeval silence. I sat down opposite to him.

Presently he got up, sighed, and looked at his book

again before putting it down. He was not cognizant of his proximity to eternal truth. He had some vapid little dream in his mind.

I looked from him towards a framed picture that stood on an easel. It was almost finished; brown tulips, a china lady, and a wine-glass vomiting beads. I use a coarse word, but it was really an enchanting picture with beautiful values, very reposing, very poetic, very Barbier. My eyes softened. Barbier was such a simple, pleasant fellow, such a nice child.

"You like it?" he asked.

I nodded.

He sighed.

I looked at him and asked, "Dreams?"

"Yes," he answered. "Of a little daughter."

"I also," I murmured, "of a son. "Paul," I cried, "I am tired of realization. I shall surrender myself to contemplation. I see my son as I can never possess him!"

"You have been to see Verne," he remarked, and walked away to his little group of models.

"Verne is the only man at whose feet I sit."

"Ah, well!" sighed that willow-tree of a Barbier again. "'The Great God Bobo-Wawa.' For me—although a man of my *métier* should never say it—he is only Still Life."

I knew then that Barbier's dream-daughter was no æsthetic arrangement of a sentimental idea, but a new-born, red, puling monkey, with flannel wrappers and unpleasant little napkins. I smelt the baby odour and heard harsh infant screams. I dissolved from a bull-deity into thin air. Fortunately for our friendship a gravure of a negro-carving hung upon the wall above the *récamier*, a very splendid example of that art for which Jean Toiyeau would give the whole Louvre. I got up and went to it, weighing carefully

in my mind the merits of mass-production by one genius against the production of one idea by the masses. I looked at that strange god of procreation for a minute with absorbed attention, and then turning slowly said to Barbier :

“ Eh, well, we have both had negromania ! ”

He laughed and I laughed. We looked one another in the eyes ; our spirits rose, and we slapped each other's shoulders.

“ Come on ! ” I cried, “ Bring the newborn and let us read it together at the Café-Riche to the confounding of Mumbo-Jumbo.”

CAFÉ VOLTAIRE

*April 17, 1921*

You think I am a joker, Girrard ? How serious then are my responsibilities. A joker must always tell the strict truth. A philosopher may lie ; it is of little consequence another philosopher will expose him. “ I am not of your opinion,” he will say. The errors of philosophers in regard to the truth are dignified, sometimes they make honourable reputations ; but if a joker lies he simply denies himself. It is easier to be court magician than court fool. To begin with, a Fool must have human nature at his finger-ends, added to that a piercing intellect and a perfect sense of proportion. The greatest Fool sees life exactly as it is, no point of view is allowed him, he must love life, and be in sympathy with all men.

I fear, therefore, Girrard, that when you dub me joker you assign me too high a place in the hierarchy of this world. I must have the modesty to refuse the title, though like Cæsar, I put it by with a reluctant gesture. Do not, I beg you, offer me the Cap and Bells again, for I am not proof against such flattery,

and most likely next time I shall accept this crown, since it is Girrard that would make a king of me.

*April 29, 1921*

#### LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE

Some time ago Raynal conceived a cathedral. He is no architect and he cannot build; nevertheless he conceived a cathedral wherein to worship a God, and this would not have been serious had he hidden his condition and devoted his wits to procuring an abortion. But Raynal had no shame. He neglected his work, his financial articles in the "Nouveau Temps" failed regularly to appear, and he gave up caring for his wife's welfare. She had been our friend Marie Deschamps, and now she came to all of us in turn to ask us for help, for advice, for interference.

I well remember the day she came to me. Marie belonged to the Quartier by birth and by profession. She had been a good girl to us, but it was Raynal's last student foolishness to marry her. He adored the life of the Quartier as only one who has no natural aptitude for it can adore it, and when finally, in spite of his artistic fancies, his temperament and an uncle set him down to financial journalism, he took Marie Deschamps with him as a souvenir. All went moderately well until the unfortunate accident of the cathedral. Marie is without imagination. In the old days she did her duty with cheerful composure in that state of life into which it had pleased God to call her. Now that times are changed she does her new respectable duty in the same spirit but with limited success. Marie has always conducted herself according to a code; before, it was the code of the Quartier, Law I, Article 1—NEVER REFUSE AN HONEST MAN; Article 2—ACCEPT THE INEVITABLE CHEER-

FULLY. This code was her swaddling-clothes, her school prima, and later she read it somehow from her prayer-book. When she married she changed it. EXPECT A REGULAR SUM OF MONEY FROM THY HUSBAND AND SECURE TO THE FUTURE ALL THAT ECONOMY CAN EXTRACT THEREFROM. Raynal was unhappy. She looked appalling in her married clothes, which were invariably black. Their flat, cleaned by herself every morning with felt slippers on her feet and a long blue pinafore over her nightgown, was the extreme of bourgeois respectability, in spite of Raynal's pictures.

One morning she came to me in tears.

She had hardly sat down in my study before she began to cry. "Tout est cassé! Tout est cassé! Il ne va plus chez le journal." Those were her first words. "He has bought a thousand big white sheets of paper and a thing like a guillotine to hold a huge board, and when I ask, 'What are you up to?' he mutters 'Nothing.'"

"Courage," I answered, "it will pass. Husbands are not like men. They have inconsistent vices."

She understood that I expected the same courage from her that she had shown in the past, and swallowed her tears. With admirable cheerfulness she asked after Legros, "ce mince Barbier", for whom she had always entertained a shy, worshipful love, Auguste Verne, Jerome, and you, Jean Girrard, the man for whom Alphonse would drown God. She thinks you an honest gentleman with a smile even for les poux inferieurs. She never liked you.

I was touched by these old phrases, and when she made up her mind to leave me and face the bal blanc. at home said :

"May I come and see François?"

"Why of course!"



I went about five days later. Up ten half flights of stairs in a corner of the Place St. Suplice lived Raynal. A funeral furnisher ruled the ground floor, and between him and Raynal lived four other families, descending in affluence in constant ratio to the rise of the stairs. Over Raynal in the attic lodged a pair of unmarried poets, male and female, whose cigarette ash fell on to his balcony and blew in at the window.

I found Raynal standing in the middle of his tiny salon, dreaming. An architect's easel took up most of the room, and a great many huge plans flopped over the furniture and down on to the floor with the draught of my entry.

Raynal received me with open arms.

"My dear fellow," he cried "my dream is coming true. I have waited for it for ten years. You will not believe that anything but comments upon the stock market can possibly come from me ; but, see ! I have conceived the plans of a magnificent cathedral."

Several books on "Stress", "Arches", "Modern American Architecture", and so forth, lay upon the mantelpiece, and on the easel board I saw the most superb cathedral façade that fancy can create.

"It is superb," I cried ; "it is magnificent ! I did not know you had it in you, Raynal. Congratulations !" He was on paper a second Michelangelo. The immortal façade was built of air, of course ; but though no stone would ever raise it up to heaven it was worth in its present state, ten thousand comments on Finance, though each were wrought into a sonnet.

"For many months," said Raynal, "I lay under a dark cloud ; then one morning the blue sky opened, I was pierced with a shaft of light, and here is my cathedral. I see it as clearly as you can see that barrack of a seminary, and in a few months' time,

provided that nothing interrupts me, it will be completed ; then for the realization ! ”

“ In the meantime,” I said, “ I am your bank.”

“ Thank you ! Thank you ! Thank you ! ” he cried. “ I have discovered there is a God, that He brings joy to the brave, and sees that His prophets do not want. I have espoused joy.”

The laws of human life order that such a fellow as Raynal shall come to waste, and in the end die half-mad in some kennel. However, to continue.

He had finished work for that day. “ Do not finish and begin two façades in the same twelve hours,” he said. “ I will come out with you.”

We went down into the square. It was the end of the day, the time when St. Supliciens commence the Dogs’ Parade. Jacqueline and Tou-tou, Spot and Trésor, dragged their owners at the ends of leashes from tree to kiosk, from rubbish heap to lamp-post, and roving, bemuzzled dogs indulged in various amiable conferences with their acquaintances.

We went along into the Carréfour de l’Odeon, and then up to the Voltaire. For both of us our student-café days are over. We are become somewhat snobbish towards Montparnasse.

“ Oh, the red plush ! The red plush !  
Of the Voltaire ! Of the Voltaire !  
It is to me the ideal  
Setting for a supper.”

said Raynal, whom I had never known so full of plain, sound happiness.

We ordered lobster and beefsteak.

“ I can see my cathedral at evening,” he cried. “ It shall stand in a position similar to the Invalides. A wide Place shall stretch round it, and it shall be enormous. Or it shall stand in a green cultivated

plain surrounded by low hills. It will give birth to a town, like the cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It shall! It is no dream. One needs only courage in this world, Alphonse."

I raised my glass.

"To the glory of God and the consummation of your happiness," I said.

"I am perfectly solid," he cried. "I have now only to execute clean plans. For floral mummary and blousy decoration I have no eye nor hand, and therefore do you not expect them. I have made this affair out of my own flesh upon which vine leaves do not crawl."

Raynal was in excellent health.

A few days later I had another visit from Marie.

"He is mad!" she cried. "I have tried to bear it but his behaviour is out of all reason. He makes me live in the bedroom and the kitchen, and takes all his meals out—alone. That I could endure; he might beat me, he might go to some other woman, he might starve me—I should have nothing to say; but he is mad."

"You are excited, Marie, and a little mixed," I said.

"Surely you recognize the madness of Parnassus!"

"He! Art! Impossible! We shall starve. He has no right to pretend to paint pictures; he was always an interloper."

I laughed. "You remember Michel's description: 'He has neither the hair, nor the eyes, nor the degeneracy, nor the dirt, nor the incompetence, nor the poverty, nor the conceit, nor the blatancy, nor the daring, of an artist. He has no ideals, nor fanaticism, nor crudity, nor egotism, nor idleness. He has tried to borrow every vice in the Quartier. He is a parvenu.'"

"He wrote very correctly about money," she grumbled.

"He will again."

"Never—he has the disease. I might as well see if the old den is empty. I will come back to-night."

"I will give you a thousand francs not to leave him for two months," I said sternly.

"I don't want your dirty francs," she screamed. "I hate him, the animal!"

"For God's sake be quiet and amuse yourself with another man for two months."

She began to cry with great energy. "'Suis enceinte. I try to tell him but he won't hear. Whenever we meet we quarrel."

"You are a fool, Marie. Go home and be a good girl; think of the infant. François is 'absent'; when he returns he will be overjoyed."

"Peste!" said Marie sharply. "I have forgotten what the world is like. Good-bye."

Next day I met Lefanu in the street.

"Raynal is designing a cathedral," he said, "for the 'Nouveau Temps.'"

"Humph," I said, "is that so; have you seen his plans?"

"The plans of his own lunatic asylum! Bah—no!" Lefanu bolted, as his wont is after a few seconds' talk with anyone, into an aperture. Sometimes he shoots into a shop, sometimes up a flight of stairs, sometimes into a public lavatory.

Everybody I met informed me about Raynal's cathedral, and all spoke of him as if he were an idiot. He had never got the Quartier to assimilate him. I was amused. I saw, particularly in Lefanu's mind and in Remmy's face—he has no mind—an uneasy fear that Raynal's cathedral might "come off." Raynal

was an unknown quantity ; the force of his conviction spread nervousness and jealousy.

It was not correct to call on Raynal among a certain set ; amongst the others I was the only one who had the energy to climb his stairs. At last his cathedral became so famous that Le Gros was sent to bring a report on it to Verne. He found Raynal's door locked.

Time passed, and it was said that Raynal was spoiling the custom of all the favourite cafés. Wherever he saw an acquaintance he rolled up to him and dropped a cartload of his edifice upon him. Somebody said he was writing a new religion to match it. Naturally gossip raised up an imaginary fane of grotesque proportions, and strong jokes endowed it with an infamous purpose. I was exquisitely amused.

Marie came again and said that he was woree. He had given her a diamond ring. On the occasion of this present she had got her news into his ears. He had replied :

" Good ! let us hope it will prove another Pantagruel." That had put strange ideas into her mind. She feared she would give birth to a deformity.

I laughed and said she had better produce a pair of pretty acolytes.

She told Gabriel Vannes what I had said, and decided I was conspiring against her. Gabriel Vannes told Le Gros that Raynal was fathering an archbishop, Le Gros told Lefanu the whole thing was colossal humbug, that there was no cathedral at all, and the matter began to be forgotten.

One day Raynal drove up to my house in a taxi, and with the help of the concierge carried a parcel as large as a mattress into my vestibule. I came out of my study to see what the fuss was about.



"It's finished—it's finished!" shouted Raynal, and embraced me. "I want your advice."

"Well, let us take it into the studio," I said. We staggered into the studio with it. Trembling, Raynal cut the cords with his pocket-knife, ripped up the wrappers, and produced to my amazed eyes plan after plan for a complete cathedral. For the ground plans and sections I will say nothing. They had probably no value. But the elevations awed me. I was struck dumb.

"It is magnificent. It is complete," cried Raynal.

He looked worn and yellow. The splendid health of earlier in the year was gone. He shivered with emotion, shook from head to foot with ecstasy, and all of a sudden smiled and fainted.

I threw him on to the divan, and with the help of Petrushka shortly recovered him. When he was composed I sat beside him and talked as calmly as I could, and quietly ordered him to leave his cathedral with me, in the certain knowledge that I respected it as a miracle, and to take a long holiday for which I should be honoured to find the money. Surely the loan of his cathedral justified the gift. To my surprise he acquiesced in everything; and almost without reference to his masterpiece, through the excess of joy that was in him, left my house.

Raynal took Marie to Boulogne and I received many a long pleasant letter from him there. I should join them and lose myself from the world among the great sand dunes of Paris-Plages. I ought to come and smell the tar in Boulogne Harbour and the salt sea wind, and appreciate the commotion when the Folkestone packet came in; but I knew that the pleasure of wishing for my company was greater than the pleasure of my presence would have been. Beside, had I not

taken charge of Raynal's soul? I was faithful and showed it to Barbier alone.

After several weeks he came to see me again—strong, blithe, bland, his former self.

"We have had a splendid time, thanks to you," he said, "and I have patched it up with the 'Nouveau Temps.' You have been extremely good to me during my 'illness,' Alphonse."

"And how is your wife, François?"

"Splendid. We are looking forward with immense joy to our happiness. The rest has done her incredible good. You must agree to stand godfather to him."

"I shall do so with delight," I said; "and how—Do you intend anything further with——"

"My cathedral?" he asked, and laughed. "Really, Alphonse, I believe I have had my dream. I have captured a cloud from the sky—it was glorious, it was with me all my holiday; but you know I am not an architect—the thing would fall down. If you care to keep it, do so. It has made all the difference to me. I am glad I was mad enough, glad I had the courage, but I have also got the courage to know that what is done is finished."

Thus I came to possess the finest cathedral in the world. Many a man saw its grand façade, many a man revealed himself before it, all of us knew that it was out of proportion to our souls and that God abode in it; but it was never exhibited in any public building, nor shown to the Minister of Public Works, nor to any magnate of the Church of Rome, nor to any millionaire.

Raynal frequently comes to see me, and sometimes steals off alone to look at it. I keep the plans in a magnificent locked portfolio upon an easel. The first

time he saw that great blue book gilded with Spanish gold he asked me what was in it.

"Your plans," I said.

"Mort de Dieu!" he exclaimed, "I might have known! La Cathédrale Engloutie!"

STUDIO BARBIER

*April 29, 1921*

Marguerite, there is a rose-bush outside the window, beautiful with the green of spring, and my heart is delighted. Green! Why does tender, bright green fill my heart with delicate and lovely fancies and set me dreaming of the old woods and forests of Fairyland? It is a sad and quiet afternoon and the colours of the leaves and flowers gleam as if in the shadow of a thunderstorm. Barbier is entrancing me with the music of Chopin, while the rain patters an accompaniment upon the lilac leaves. The cool studio is like a forest pool overhung with beech-trees; it is filled with the fragrance of lilac and narcissi and the refreshing smell of rain.

I am twenty years old again and delight in the poetry of tears.

I am in love with an incomprehensible and uncomprehending woman who has left her youth in the forests of Brittany. I discovered it there ironed and goffered by the Washerwomen-of-the-Night, and have brought it back to her wrapped in a parcel of romance tied with a thousand yards of lovers' sighs. She wears it for me alone, though she laughs as she puts it on, and we spend three days and nights at Fontainebleau in the characters of a prince and princess. At the end of that time I see her youth is soiled and crushed, but, to my annoyance, she behaves as if it were still fresh.

Marguerite, I do not believe you have ever known the romantic raptures of a foolish passion, or the anti-quities and absurdities of one and twenty. You were born wise, pure and delicate-minded.

But I have fallen sick of unwholesome sugar plums, and danced like a lunatic in the moonlight of idiotic love to the strains of a croaking hurdy-gurdy. One glance of a strange woman has shattered my heart to a million sparks of fire, and I have fallen into the abyss of divine giddiness simply because the tone of a woman's voice has vibrated a chord in my heart. I have been drunk with fire, I have suffered every hallucination known to the devil, and every pain of birth and death for the sake of a white hand, or a pretty ankle, or a sentimental sigh.

Now I am an old man of thirty, and require faithfulness, good sense, good taste, and intellectual refinement in my mistress. The indiscrimination of my twentieth year is lost to me for ever. Alas ! I cannot any longer appreciate Romance—the poetry of utter foolishness.

So say I, Marichaud, regretting my boyhood ; but you, Marguerite, possibly have a different opinion.

CAFÉ D'ALUMBERT

*May 1, 1921*

Girard, I desire nothing new, nothing new. I am content with the five fingers of my hands, my attribute of consciousness, the green fields, Paris, the fate that threw me into a man's body in the year eighteen ninety-one. I hope only that my hands may learn to serve me perfectly, my consciousness become more vividly acute, that the years of my life may not be drawn out after the death of my spirit. I am sentimental to-night. *Nuit de Mai !*

Shall I take my lute and kiss the Muse ?

No, sir, the trees are bronzed with the fading light of day, the houses are drunkenly flushed with afterglow, and I—I? I am too grossly conscious of natural beauty to etherealize upon a ten-stringed dream the animal exaltation that expands my heart ; rather, I slap money on the table, call for wine, and, having drunk deeply, glory in the burning rhythm of my blood until the houses blanch before the rising moon, and I stagger home wondering what I am and wherefore the warm sky is fomented with white, quivering bubbles.

Perhaps—yes perhaps—I am drowning in a sea of sharp Moszelle. It pricks me. Yes. Yes. But when I come to my senses I am lying in a thorn-bush in the woods of Boulogne.

A lunatic among thorns, a morality on May-madness.

CHEZ BARBIER

*May 4, 1921*

I happened to be on the Quai D'Orsay this morning, Marguerite, and there met Barbier walking slowly to nowhere in pursuit of a lost idea. I had put on summer clothing and was in consequence lighthearted and happy, for the brilliance of the day would have justified the costume of innocence. Barbier was melancholy ; he said his soul was empty and the Devil might have it for all he cared, so I dragged him off to the Rue de la Paix, where I bought myself a yellow dressing-gown in memory of Regnier, and Barbier ordered one of orange. The weather led me to further eccentricities and extravagances, and when you next visit me, Marguerite, I shall be as magnificent as the Prince of Persia in a pyjama suit of flame-



coloured crêpe de Chine and a dressing-gown of yellow taffeta embroidered in red and blue oriental designs.

We had lunch at Prunier's and then returned to Barbier's garden, where I have spent the whole afternoon idly reading "Le Lys Rouge", for no particular reason but that it was lying upon the studio table. Barbier and I drank tea with lemon in it and praised the sun, and after that he read me "Horace", to which I half listened, imagining myself a boy again at the Lycée, and dreamed, as I did at school, about something totally different. I like Barbier to read to me, although he never reads anything outside the Classic Age, for he has a cultured and refined voice which stimulates my imagination and heightens my perceptions, and he renders the music of Voltaire, Cornielle, Racine, Molière, and their compères to perfection.

I sit on the miniature flagged terrace of the garden which altogether is not much larger than Madame du Merry's drawing-room, and watch the little fountain splash into its shimmering marble pool. If I were to describe Barbier's garden as it ought to be described, I should write a thousand lyrics scored for a quartet of sparrows, bees, fountains, and the hum of distant traffic. It is like a garden in an old tale at the bottom of a well, for tall houses overlook it on every side and a high wall divides it from neighbouring courtyards. Against one wall grow a peach, a plum, and a cherry-tree, and in the corner a luxuriant fig, which brings dreams of the depth of summer, of dark woods and dark hot nights and the silence of brooding storms. Down the right-hand wall runs a little pergola from the terrace on which our tea-table stands, into the scented shade of a lilac-bush. A rose-tree grows up each of the four marble pillars which support the pergola roof, Madame Edouard Herriott, Madame du

Châtelet, Lady Wellington, and Malmaison their names—three beautiful women, and one sad empress, this last reminding me of Prud'hon's melancholy genius and belonging to another century.

From where I sit I can see every flower in Barbier's little parterre, I can count the goldfish in the sunlit pool, the blue gentian, and orange and pink alpine wallflowers round its edge, the jonquils and many coloured tulips in the borders. I can smell the sun-baked plaster of the walls, and I can smell hot leaves and flowers, the hot city and the hot sky ; I can, in fact, smell summer, and it makes me as somnolent as a leopard, with only one desire ; to lie with my head in your lap, Marguerite, and stare into the hazy blue sky until I am blind with sleep.

CAFÉ NAUDIN FONTAINEBLEAU

*May 25, 1921*

Girard ! There are no clouds in the blue sky and I am happy. It was the same yesterday and the day before, but this morning the green trees have forgotten the possibility of bad weather and are become glorious as the trees of heaven. The blatant sun triumphantly draws out a theme of joy from the whole of life in brilliant brazen concord.

Beat the drum, you there, sweat in the intoxication of foolish happiness, and at all costs make a terrific noise ; and you, violins, throw harmony to the winds, scream in enunciation at the top of your voices. Silence, plaintive flutes, and you, lovesick harps, this is not your occasion. Louder ! Louder ! No half-breaths, no quaverings from indetermined brass, but resonance. This is no time for hesitant horns, no time for spluttering clarionetists. Now again ; no matter if the critics accuse us of monotony, we are

not playing to the critics for once in our lives, but to the sun, who will not explode if we yell the same twelve bars in his honour from dawn till dark.

I am the laggard at a Dyonisian rout, Girrard. The madmen have gone to fresh altars, and I stand alone in a trampled grove contemplating the wreckage of the sacrifice. The blood dries on the white altar, wine-fumes mingle with the scent of flowers from discarded garlands. Oh, Bacchus! Oh, Venus! contemplate your most fervent worshipper, yonder intoxicated crew has forgotten you. Its throat chokes with incoherent hymns, it falls down and rolls over paralysed with senseless leapings.

Ha, sir! 'Tis May! Goats dance in the lush green grass, sows crowned with parsley wallow in the warm hemlock, and swallows scatter their shadows on the ground as they flutter in circles over the tree-tops.

"Marlbruck s'en va en guerre!"

The rejoicing of the animal kingdom culminates in a military band, for this is some sort of holiday.

I am tired of the universal brutality around me and will sneak quietly back into Paris. Alas! Girrard, all men's finest odes are written in the atmosphere of the study. The poet is a frail creature unable to contest the nightingale among the crudities of the country; he prefers to sing amongst sparrows, who are ready to admit that he finds in them no rival. Or, shall I be generous and say that in the shelter of grey walls alone, man is able to contemplate the whole of his empire without favouritism to the beauty of Nature.

CHEZ BARBIER

*June 2, 1921*

I am on fire again to-night, Girrard. If Barbier

were not here I should join the gods in corybantic antics and dance upon his parquet floor an expression of the joy within me. I should not indulge in rapid motion, probably I should not move three inches to the right or left, but rather flatter my body into consciousness of its own perfection by various movements which Barbier's low temperature would call contortions.

And all this elevation of spirit, this frantic desire to exalt among the Olympians, comes from the glorious blue window-panes of nine o'clock on a June night, a colour which recalls Ulysses and the blue Ægean Sea to me, and makes me tremble with a vision of high adventure.

*June 14, 1921*

#### ONE WET AFTERNOON

One wet afternoon I went out through the Luxembourg Gardens into the Rue Vaugirard. It was raining hard, and I felt sorry that the forlorn statues under the museum walls had no mackintoshes to protect their lean, cold bodies from the wet. Old what's-his-name Faun grinned like a comedian with the toothache, and the rest . . . I think my city, when she created the Musée du Luxembourg, was in that thin state of mind which too often besets genius . . . for the rest, I looked at them as if they were masterpieces, but within felt the slightly contemptuous pity one has for unsuccessful poor relations.

I crossed the street and squeezed my way along the narrow pavement beneath a forest of shining wet umbrellas. I was merry. There was so much rain that it was a pleasure to be out in it. The models of club-feet in Gronchard's, the rubbish at Millforts' Magasin de Hautes Curiosités, vases with blue birds



on them, common drawing-room chairs, beads, anti-macassars, mildewed mirrors, stirred my comic sense. I laughed with the Ridiculous Muse at the absurdity of life.

Under the Odeon Arcade I bought a quantity of Scarlatti's music and lingered before a collection of prints, indecent, sentimental, rococo. Small wonder that the English call us the gay nation! You could paper Paris with the eighteenth-century gallants and demi-toilets of her print-shops. But here was something really to delight me, a huge gravure of the 'nineties, "Le Baiser", the kind of thing my nurse and I used to admire together when I was a child. Even now it gave me a splendid satisfaction. A dollish gentleman in evening dress and silk spotted socks, an innocuous compatriot of that Baiser of the Luxembourg who is a menace to young women, bowed upon the lips of a piece of feminine upholstery; palms in the background, a dim orchestra beyond plush curtains, discreet lighting from a lace lamp-shade "Some of these days," I used to think, "I will be that young gentleman," but I reflected now that though I had attended plenty of dances with dim orchestras and lovely women, I had never experienced that ease, that suave pleasure, which seemed to surround the two people in the picture. Perhaps the world into which I had been born faded before I was grown up. In truth the nineteenth century died unnoticed by me while I was still at school, and when I came out into the world again I was confronted with a few old fading traditions and an immature century. I had hardly begun to build with these poor fabrics when the war took hold on me, on life, on art, for her own purposes. I tried now to look back across the chasm between me and my boyhood. Zola died the victim of a defective gas stove. His death had left



a lasting memory, for Zola was a great name when I was a child ; Renoir and Zola, Renoir did not know the other was alive, surely. How was it possible that a man who slept in Oriental splendour behind a silver grille could be cognizant of a fellow who saw beauty in wet umbrellas ? And yet I know and cannot appreciate that Zola in his youth frequented the Nouvelles Athènes, and that one may see his portrait, as well as Renoir's, in a group by Fantin-Latour. Manet, Monet, Chavannes, Cezannes ; these people were atheists and refused to see God's beautiful world as He had made it. Cezannes, the most daring sinner of them all, really frightened many good, timid people . . . but when I came to look at Manet, and Monet, and Chavannes, and Cezannes, after my schooldays, I could not even understand why my confrères at Sizard's talked of them as if they were sided with them in some huge quarrel against the world. For me they belonged as much to the glorious past as Valasquez or Ingres.

I moved along the old grey arcade. The grey rain hung down across the arches like a curtain of glass beads. I paused to look at a Harlequinness in black tights and bouffé skirt who shot out of the neck of a champagne bottle. She was the centre of a little gallery depicting the pleasures of that extinct animal the Roué. Above her a lady in a top-hat and an inadequate pink satin costume-de-ball, kissed a fat financier under the mistletoe ; below her was a " Mars" trio, two wonderful young women and a skinny man at Boulogne-sur-Mer. I examined each of the dozen or so pictures in the case. There were no nudes, save one, unattainable and therefore permissible, a figure with a scarf of Milky Way standing upon the crescent moon. At the bottom of the case was a little dry-point of a woman in a wood. She belonged perhaps

to the late 'eighties. Her tight coat was buttoned from hem to throat, and she wore a little fur hat and carried a little muff on a cord. She had violets at her bosom. How sweet and melancholy she was, as if she were thinking of her lover. I found her again in another dry-point. She drove with her husband in a carriage and pair. It was summer now and she held a white lace parasol over her fair head ; she was all in white, innocent, timid, like a pale rose in a lover's garden. "She is going to pay a call on the Duchesse de Pyrennes," I thought, and felt that yesterday I, a poet, held her in my arms and whispered passionate words to her, words that she had never heard in her marriage of conveniences, words that she longed for. She had been shy in love and full of childish wonder. "Oh, Madame la Ministère de Fresnoy-Myrtil, I am a martyr of dreams, my soul's banner bears the word 'Unsatisfied.' Even as I tenderly embraced you, I longed for something else, my sensual-spiritual ideal. One day I shall shoot myself in your presence, and my ghost will haunt the Parc Monceau in company with other passionate shades !"

How pale and how ridiculous had been the romances of my young adolescence before women had become a reality to me. Yet they had given me a memorable pleasure.

Still thinking of Leonore whose counterpart I was destined never to meet in life, I left the arcade and went down to Dufour's to buy some of the fine cherries they sell there. Even in my schooldays I was an unfaithful lover ; the many characters I assumed possessed each one or two divinities. I remembered the vision of a stately woman in a low-cut evening dress, a black velvet sheath moulded closely to her splendid figure. My romances seem often to have

been antedated, for certainly none of my mother's friends dressed in the costumes of my inamorato.

Near this woman, in all my glimpses of her, in all our multifarious high-flown interviews which I could never bear to let pass the climax, stood inevitably on a polished mahogany table, a bowl of Maréchal Neil tea-roses. Among the odours of strawberries and tomatoes, of lettuce and oranges and damp sawdust in the fruit shop, I beheld her again and smelt again the peculiar dry smell of tea-roses. Madame la Contesse—— Who? I have forgotten her name; perhaps I never invented it.

I bought some cherries and two handsome grape-fruit of old Dufour, who spoke despairingly of the weather.

Rain or fine, frost or thaw, Dufour always made a tragedy of it; then he made a tragedy of life, as do most men who keep their hearts in a money-bag.

"My daughter is going to be married," he said, and drooped his eyes as if he were speaking of a funeral. "My only daughter. It's a wrench. She kept my accounts. I shall have to pay some fool to do it, or keep them myself."

"After all," I said, "it's human destiny."

"Destiny?" he asked casting up his eyes and hands; "we educate and cherish our children for another's benefit. Destiny! That is a big word. If I had heard of Destiny before I was born I would have begged to be excused." He sighed, and, under the impression that he had made a witty remark, allowed me to depart.

I went up the Rue de l'Odeon again. Well! Well! I thought, the past seems strangely to have been more real than the present. In those days God was still in heaven. I am a solitary figure, a disbanded recruit without a superior officer. I have only myself

to look to in my way through these worlds. We need a new God, one in conformity with the cosmogony of Einstein. In the middle of the pouring rain and severe hopes of a future religion, I saw Lefanu in wet cloth-top boots scurrying along under the opposite houses with a huge portfolio. I raised my hat to him and the water out of the brim splashed down in a torrent. I shook my hat hurriedly and replaced it; it seemed I had shaken Lefanu out of the street too, for he was no longer in sight. There are many doorways in the Rue de l'Odeon that give access to many lives. Lefanu had probably consummated an invasion. By this time I was at the top of the street again, and, having nothing better to do, went into the Voltaire and ordered a cup of coffee. I sat and watched the rain and the passers-by, a blank and uninteresting lot. I began to feel blank and uninteresting.

The waiter brought me coffee and stood awhile in the doorway, his fists on his hips, staring at the grey rock of the Odeon with his dull pale eyes; then he clicked his tongue and swiped at an imaginary fly with his napkin. I was the only customer in the café. At last, as if he could bear the silence no longer, he said:

"It's nasty weather."

I made a formal reply.

"But good for the crops," I answered, although neither of us had any connection with the country.

"That's possible," he said laconically. "Monsieur should have been here last night; we had a fine sturgeon but—— It's all gone! Finished! Vanished! It was too good to last."

"A sturgeon, that's rare," I said, not in the least interested.

"Yes, it was for a party upstairs, but the monsieur who ordered it went to prison yesterday, so there was



a regular set-out for the casuals. I tasted it. It was very good. 'This will never be paid for,' said Monsieur le Propriétaire, 'take it to the casuals.' The chef wept because it was 'garni,' and you don't often get a corpse like that to work upon, and it was never seen whole in public."

François stared again at the Odeon; the sturgeon evidently haunted him.

"You know," he said, "the *chef* stood in front of that animal worshipping it, and he wouldn't let anybody else lay a finger upon it. We sacrificed all the butter in the place to it, and if you had ordered anything else you would have found it wasn't quite up to the mark. He wasn't the only one that was mad; it meant something to several of them—of course not to me, I only serve downstairs. As it was, I had quite a 'benefit.' When one eats *Esturgeon au vin blanc* one compliments the waiter and it's a cold compliment that isn't worth a franc. Monsieur should have dined here;" and with that he went away and rearranged two paper carnations on another table.

I finished my coffee and paid for it with a five-franc note. François brought me change in a saucer.

"Keep it," said I, "in memory of the ghost of that fish. I feel honoured to have sat down at a table lately visited by such a dignitary. In former times it was heralded with music and carried in by slaves in coronets."

"*'Suis tout de même un peu couronné!'*" said François, breaking into animation. "Monsieur!" and he bowed to me as I went out. It seemed a pity that decency forbade me to tip François four francs every day, when four francs lighted up his face with such pure joy.

Still the rain fell down, and I began to tire of it, to feel aimless and a little damp within as well as



without. Fortunately I met Barbier outside the Senate House, gentle, irresistible Barbier, who if he is determined you shall do this or that, has you to heel like a submissive dog. Besides, I am a lion to Androcles; Barbier has taken too many thorns out of my paws for me to ignore his beck and call. Besides, when he invited me to return home with him I realized that I had been all the afternoon on my way to see him.

"They had a sturgeon at the Voltaire last night," I said as we set off towards his house. "The fellow who was going to eat it was arrested in the vestibule just before dinner and they served it to the casuals, that is, you and me. Arrested on the point of eating his first sturgeon!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Barbier quietly, and my damp spirits burned brightly again. Why does Barbier without a word make me as happy as a summer cloud, a child in the sunshine, an innocent prince at the court of Schlafrock-und-pantoffeln? "Here's some Scarlatti for you," I cried joyfully; "I'll carry it." I felt ingenuous, foolish, a delightful fellow; but Barbier was no different from yesterday or to-morrow. He preserves his dignity at all seasons, and develops silently and without violent combusive processes; he grows in soul and personality in the secret graceful manner of a tree.

At his house I divested myself of my wet things and borrowed a pair of his pumps, which were a trifle tight. I believe if I tried to borrow a heart he would have one to lend me.

We went into the studio. The windows were wide open and a little bright fire burned in the grate against the damp, although it was not cold. His famous garden was in tears, a gathering of weeping delphiniums, carnations, marguerites, and peonies. In the studio were bowls of huge single peonies, palest pink,

ivory, crimson, with huge yellow centres. A half-finished picture of mixed June flowers stood framed on the easel. I love Barbier's pictures; they are as delightful as Latour's, and as sincere. We stood in front of it together, and I embraced him for sheer pleasure.

"I wish I had your sincerity," I cried.

"I wish I had your genius," he replied simply.

I blushed and went over to the piano and put down my Scarlatti and the cherries. I had lost the grape-fruit.

"Come and play to me," I said.

He came over, looked in the bag, and filled his mouth with cherries.

"How can I play if you bring this sort of ambrosia?" he mumbled; but all the same he went into the garden to spit out the stones without soiling his fingers and came back to the piano. He looked at my Scarlatti, but there was Schubert on the rest, and Schubert evidently suited his mood better. He began to play. I folded my arms and leaned upon the instrument like a lover, to watch his accomplished hands on the black and white keys. The notes in the middle-bass reverberated pleasantly through my whole body, and what with watching Barbier's hands and eating cherries and waiting for those thrilling notes I forgot to listen to the music. After he had trifled a while with Schubert he drove me away with a deafening rhapsody, and I went over to the window, where to the Hongroise III I watched the rain. Presently Barbier lost himself in his private wonderland of improvisation, a marvellous business that I alone among his friends can tolerate. Strange thing, Barbier's barbarics on the clavichord, as we call these fantastical harmonies, are agreeable to my genius and often produce in me splendid thoughts. This afternoon I was innocent of thought and waited in contentment until Barbier

chose to talk to me. He suddenly stopped and sat quite still on the piano-stool with his arms hanging down. I said, without moving from the window :

" Paul, I am glad that I am just so much secured in time and space that I can at intervals say I live in the present. For of all ages known to me I love most that which contains you, this room, and this garden.

Bel aubepin, floressant,  
Verdissant,  
Le long de ce beau rivage.

You are up- and down-stream for me in this present life, but yonder and behind you are not."

" No ? " he asked, and smiled.

" Imperturbable cynic ! For God's sake, do not disillusion me ! Surely you, too, never heard the Horn of Roland nor sat at Judgment with the Saints ? "

" As you choose," he replied. " I do not certainly travel very fast, but the tortoise beat the hare."

" Not *the* tortoise, but *a* tortoise," I said.

" I am not an individualist," he answered.

He began to play again, and now I was off, God knows where, into an eighteenth-century forest, I think, with people in delightful costumes ; and while I hunted a white roe with a pair of white dogs he tinkled Scarlatti. I began to smoke and suddenly, while he played, cried out :

" Paul ! I have discovered that I am a happy man." Barbier played on quietly, and I began to walk up and down the room. The whole place smelt delicious ; the scent of flowers and of the damp garden mingled pleasantly with a faint sharp odour of turpentine. At my grandfather's house in the country when a room had been repainted and the windows stood open into the garden there was just such a smell.

" Paul," I interrupted, walking up and down and

thinking of the country, "when I met you this afternoon I was planning a new religion. I thought I was a lonely traveller across an immense steppe. I was making new gods for company and new rules to lift the burden of self-command from my shoulders. But now there seems no need to do so; here everything is as it should be; a God would only disarrange matters with his wars, his calamities, his awful jealousies."

"New Gods?" cried Barbier, who had stopped playing, "without brains, without balance, without experience! They must have been excellent demons. Gods take long years to mature; like good wines they have vintages."

"I cannot worship an old man, Paul," I said; "and the God that I would worship away from here must have more nous than Dionysius and be the master of Eros and the Muses. He must bind the wrath of Jehova, be kindlier than Jove, and set as Queen above me some Pallas-Aphrodite who shall count me among her sons. But let it pass; I do not want to intrude a deity here. You are the titular God of these shades."

"The sacrifices are few here, and I have forgotten the smell of burnt incense," smiled Barbier.

"Have I not brought you cherries?" I cried; "and does not my devoted heart smoke often before you in the cool of evening? Come, let us talk of sacrifice and urns, of immortality and death; come sit with me by the window, Paul, in the joyful melancholy of this wet afternoon."

But Paul continued to sit at the piano, to watch me, and to say nothing, and I knew that he expected me to go on talking and not to wait for his answers, which he reserves from me on almost all occasions. I continued to pace about the room. I can talk more freely thus.



Would you not like a nineteenth century nymph in your wet garden, Paul?" I asked: "a coquettish, sentimental young lady with a Grecian nose and smooth marble limbs? I will make you one with a pair of Psyche wings, and perhaps a dove at her breast, who shall say, 'See how demure I am, monsieur—see how demure: my robe is not so short as it was last century, and I am waiting for the good man who will be my husband. I am not thinking of you, monsieur!—oh, no!—and I never watch you when we are alone.' But at night she would tip-toe up to your open window and perhaps step into the room and ask you ingenuous questions about your painting. If you painted anything less innocent than flowers I dare not describe the horrid opinion she would have of you; but flowers, my dear soul, were innocent things before Cezannes got hold of them; since then I have seen still life that makes me blush. Play on, Paul, I must have soft music to my recitatif, or in the intervals at least an obligato. Play a mazurka surely, and I will put a wreath of old-fashioned marble roses on your nymph's smooth little head."

Barbier smiled and indicated that the nymph had just entered the room. He played the mazurka and I danced like a lunatic, and when, panting for breath, I threw myself into a chair, he got up and sat down quietly near me as if neither of us had played the fool.

"The nineteenth century makes me sentimental," he said. "I think I should have liked to have lived there particularly at the time when lavender gloves were in fashion. I should have liked to flirt and give nosegays and to have kept mementoes of all the ladies I gave nosegays to. I have never grasped the technique of modern flirtation, it is all too serious for me."

"Yet, Paul, you are the most genuine man I know,



and like nothing so well as the plain truth ! ” I cried, delighted to hear Barbier express himself. “ In your affairs I imagine that you are delicate but frank. Happy the woman who has the good fortune to charm you.”

“ I am not attractive to women,” said Barbier simply. “ I find myself unable to express the obvious. What seems very clear to me I imagine is clear to others with me, and I pass it over.”

“ You are unhappy, Paul ? ”

“ It is difficult to extricate oneself from the last century ; from Baudelaire, Gautier, Mallarmé. Their presence is still with us,” he went on. “ We try to set up something which is different. It is the antagonism of children towards their parents. I try to preserve in a back room of my father’s house, as it were, something clear, something simple, something that is my own, but the echo of the conversation of that crowd who used to meet at the Nouvelles Athènes knocks against it and shatters it. Tolstoi, Byron, Balzac, Goethe are beyond the scope of my antagonism, which is intimate and personal. I attempt a small honesty. My sincerity is a small one. I am not vain enough to attract women ; women like a large conceit in a man, carelessness towards the world, and a certain degree of contempt. I am not a decorative lover.”

“ And has the purity of your love no value for her ? ” I asked, for I realized for a certainty that Barbier was in love.

To my surprise he made no evasion.

“ She sees that I would make a very dull companion,” he replied. “ When I told her that I loved her, she asked me how it was that I only painted flowers. Instead of giving her the answer that I have since thought of, and which probably would have won her, I

became abashed. She is not an unkind woman, but she is a woman of intelligence."

Barbier looked at me.

"She visited my house in company with her sister. After that I believe she understood that our marriage would necessitate the sacrifice of one of us, and that, as a foundation of happiness in marriage, the sacrificial altar is not to be recommended."

"And since then," I suggested, "you have lost interest in the flowers that you brilliantly defended when it was too late, and there is nothing very pleasant in your life?"

"There is not too much that is pleasant," he replied. "I should be niggardly to say that there is nothing. My chief pleasure is in imagining that she is in this house and that she appreciates me. For her I would have changed everything; but as she did very wisely not believe that possible, I make the dream of her live here with me and endure me as I am. Her memory does not suffer as she would have done."

"And you are happier perhaps than you might have been?" I asked.

"No, I prefer the beauty of a real tragedy to the tragedy of a beautiful dream."

"And there is no hope?" I asked.

"Is it possible to join again the broken branch of a cherry-tree?"

"You can put it in a beautiful vase and the flowers will last their time."

"But the fruit?"

"Oh, no, Paul, you cannot expect it to fruit! Come, be more explicit," I begged. "Is everything really over?"

"Yes, everything is really over. There was a storm, a great storm, but an unexpected one. I see now that it had been coming from the very beginning.

As I told you, a branch snapped and there was nothing more to be done. Twice or thrice I might have won her, but at the moment I always forgot to be arrogant or a savage ; I always fell to thinking, when I should have said or done something."

"But you are not a weak man, Paul?" I asked anxiously. "Celibacy and a mournful bachelordom do not——"

"No, no," he interrupted, and smiled. "She had, perhaps, not quite sufficient delicacy. I console myself with that. She never discovered my rhythm, and I was unable to accommodate myself to hers. She had, perhaps, no sense of the rhythm of another life, or perhaps had never troubled to ask herself if such a thing were possessed by anybody. I am successful, I believe, with only very simple or very subtle women. Her beauty was almost perfect, and she had an almost perfect gaiety ; but—I saddened her. I should have made her melancholy unless I could have learned that most difficult of all accomplishments, to keep time with her temperament."

"You make me feel coarse, Paul," I said.

"You are coarse," he replied, "both in your work and in your life. I envy you. All genius is coarse. It is only we who worship the sublime from the middle heights who must forgo coarseness unless we wish to become swine."

"Paul, Paul!" I cried, "your unhappiness is making an egoist of you."

"Maybe," he murmured, and I understood that I had better hold my peace.

CHEZ LE COQ D'OR,  
*June 18, 1921*

I am sitting under a horse-chestnut-tree outside a

country inn. The weather is sombre and the atmosphere laden with thunder heat. What a world of shadows there is in the branches of this tree.

I am amazed as I look upward into its radiant green gloom at the romance which surges into my heart. I am reminded of the deep green sea swelling under a cave upon a calm, dark day. Girrard! I believe that of all trees I love the chestnut-tree the most. Like an old peasant from a fairy-tale, stout and familiar he spreads his umbrella over my head against the summer rain, and I look up into the lining and see it filled with depths of mystery that sets my mind again among the fancies of my boyhood when I wandered with Grimm and Hans Andersen in that unforgettable land most men have forgotten.

"Oh, chestnut-tree!" I cry, "preserve me a simpleton like yourself, if at the same time I may be endowed with a dark green umbrella under which shall gather the simple ghosts of the Old Folk, Old Songs, and Old Romances."

The chestnut-tree says nothing, but I can tell what he has in his mind.

"Make the best of your own qualities," he thinks, "and don't try and borrow other people's."

These stout old peasants always moralize, Girrard. Therefore, as the thunder rain is splashing into my beer, I will retire under the shelter of the Coq d'Or and sketch out a new inspiration I have just received, no doubt from Hans Castanie, who does not care to send his guests away empty though he cannot part with his magic gamp.

*June 24, 1921*

THE FABULOUS MUSEUM

Old Regnier lives down in the Cité, near what he

likes to call "Il Munichipio," in a little old flat overlooking the Seine. He spends his remaining days pottering about among the tram-lines, the bare courtyards of the Prefecture, the plant and flower-markets along the quays. Rarely do I go to see him but he takes me into a great grey caserne to smell the cavalry forage. Like Puss in Boots, whom he really resembles, I suspect him of a not altogether disinterested affection for rats and mice. It is on their account, I believe, that he lives in the noisy city where the lineal descendants of those who followed Charlemagne on his campaigns rampage from cellar to cellar, and dance their sarabands and courantes in the attics to music learnt from the best masters, to whom they sent special envoys, as is well known by everybody familiar with the lives of Couperin, Scarlatti, Haydn, and Mozart.

At home Regnier wears a yellow silk dressing-gown brocaded with flowers, and is ruled by an antique sister and a still more aged grey parrot. Madame ma Sœur is a fragment left over from the Old Régime. She is delicate, thin, and quavering like a tune played on a time-worn harpsichord. Her black silk dresses were not made in this century, her lace caps of ivory malines are of a fashion that my mother never knew. Regnier, whom she looks upon as a young man of the world, a buck, a beau, perhaps, even, a macaroni, treats her with all the respect due from a son to his mother, confides in her, asks her advice, and his small troubles and difficulties have brought into her face a resigned expression and have made her slightly sarcastic towards all men. Kindness and indulgence she shows to me, who belong to the unfortunate sex that cannot keep itself from sin and foolishness. The most deplorable of Regnier's sins is Atheism, which comes from his writing of books. She has never



accommodated herself to his authorship, and though she is proud of every word he ever put on paper, each of them has cost her a sigh, some of them tears. His books are written on his sister's heart.

When I visited Regnier as a boy, she would give me éclairs and red wine, sometimes a peach; or she would recommend to me a little book of devotion in an ivory cover, then with apprehensive glances on my soul's account, would steal away to her boudoir and leave me in charge of "Marlbruck," her grand vizier, with the canaries and the cat and Regnier. He used to read me fairy-tales in a soft, lisping voice. A thousand of fairy-tales he read me, but of all I do remember best the story of the immortal cat.

"Help! Help! for my Lord Marquisth of Carabasth isth drowning!" I never go to see old Regnier but I hear that cunning cry. His house is full of fairies. Fairies, fairies, mischievous sprites and fairies, tease the old philologist from morn till dark, cause the ink to clog in his pen, teach the parrot rude words, and twist the cord of his dressing-gown round the legs of his chair, so that he falls over when he tries to get up. When anything annoys him he says, "C'esth Madame Fanferluche qui me dérange."

Beyond all things in my childhood I adored his fabulous museum. There are a thousand relics of Phantasmagoria. Under a glass clock-shade on the mantelpiece repose the veritable jack-boots of the Great Puss himself with little silver spurs and cherry satin linings. Nearby is one of the golden apples of the Hesperides, the same which caused the Trojan War, and came at one time into the possession of Iron Hans. The walls are hung with tapestries from the Court of Salvenia and depict episodes in the life of the Roi Soleil, at least so Regnier declares. They are certainly most rare specimens of fine weaving, and represent

brocaded and peruked personages in Chinese landscapes. In a cabinet made principally of sea-horses, stands a harpsichord constructed out of a large oyster-shell, a miniature ebony billiard table with ivory cues set with brilliants, said to have been part of the accommodation of the White Cats' Palace, a fragment of tissue made of butterflies' wings, and a hundred other diminutive treasures of fairydom. On either side of this cabinet stand two gilt chairs, inlaid in an atrocious manner with amethysts the size of pigeon's eggs, beryls, topazes, crystals, and other secondary jewels to the number of three hundred and sixty-five. When I was a child they were my ideal of splendour. How shall I do justice to the other treasures in that little Musée? There you may see the cap of Fortunatus, a black taffeta fez, finely stitched about the base with black silk in an Arabic design. It is green with age and split in two or three places, and from a coral button on the top escape a few strands of what was once a luxuriant silk tassel. Regnier will show you a watch that once belonged to Faust, with the constellations instead of numbers, and cabbalistic signs upon the reverse, a royal signet presented to Prester John by the Grand Turk, a scimitar of the King of Tartary which that monarch looted from Bagdad and which is known to have an infallible stroke. The King of the Golden Mountains was one of the last to profit by its powers. As for talismans, fetishes, and charms, there are too many of them to mention, all of equal efficacy and merit, save one, which Regnier values far above the rest, a medal, nothing more fantastic than the Legion of Honour. Regnier has the right to wear it on his left breast, but he treasures it not so much for the valour that obtained it as for the story with which it was subsequently associated. This story he tells once or twice a year, whenever in fact, I go into

his museum. There I sit upon one of the graceless chairs, while he draws up an old leathern thing that Don Quixote may or may not have dreamed in, and then he will relate with much elaboration the following adventure :—

“ You must know,” it begins, “ that I was not always the old Grimalkin I am now, with no longer any taste for the chase. Fifty years ago I was an inveterate hunter ; I shot anything with any weapon, and was as ready to engage a wild boar with a sword as with the proper lance. I had two dogs ; one approximating to the type known as an English setter, the other a yellow beast of entangled lineage, my favourite, old ‘ Croquetin.’

“ The horrors of Metz and Sedan, the nightmare and disgrace of the Siege of Paris were over. I was no longer a soldier. I retired to my parents’ house in the country somewhat of a hero and immensely attractive to the young ladies of the neighbourhood. I had the Legion of Honour ; the kisses of my general still burned upon my cheeks. I was, moreover, romantic to a degree, and though I had pledged the half of my heart in Paris, did not hesitate to dispose of the remainder in fragments among the fair ones of our Department. I was never tall, but at one time, believe me, quite a Narcissus. I was not christened Eveilé Hypolyte to no purpose. Added to these attractions I wrote verse which I imagined to be the very cream of poetry. Later I understood that it was flavoured with strong ‘ Extract de Musset,’ but for all that it was elegant and well turned.

“ There was a pond in our marshes which I dignified with the name of ‘ Le Lac,’ and there I used to lie in an old boat and blow duck to pieces, until I frightened them away from the place. At other times I practised

pistol shooting among the rabbits at dusk : yes, I once killed a rook, killed a rook with a cavalry pistol. More often I rode through the forest after anything that presented itself. That winter I had the good luck to encounter a wolf ; true, he was lame in one foot, but he put up a good fight and nearly killed my yellow dog Croquetin, whom I had to take home over the saddle-bow. What a strange cavalier you would have thought me as I rode along through the snow that winter's evening, an old yellow hound in my arms, a sword in a cavalry scabbard strapped to the saddle, a game-rifle, a cartridge pouch, a bag for my dead victims strung behind me. Needless to say, I had not the wolf about me. I hung him up in a tree till I could fetch his skin, and there perhaps some rags of him still flap in the wind, for I never could find the spot again, since it snowed that night.

"Country balls in winter, picnics and excursions in summer, flirtations, dreams, music, poetry filled up my time. I led an entrancing existence, and though in public I was gay, daring, energetic, I remained isolated, saw myself as a superior being, and preferred solitude and the companionship of the woods, streams, wind, and sky to that even of the most charming young ladies. I dreamed of a time when I should renounce all frivolities and become a poet of nature. For a year, on account of my heroic deeds in the war, my family tolerated my idle behaviour, for another year I sustained it in face of their contempt. I should, perhaps, have lived among the foxes to this day but for an event which occurred in the second autumn of my rustication. It was November. On a particular day I went off as usual alone into the woods. It was a cold grey afternoon, and the mournful tinkling of our village church-bell brought thoughts of ghosts and spectres.



The forest was brown under foot with dried leaves that rustled about my horse's hoofs, the pool down in the glade, near which the bridle path to Haut Monet led, was black with decayed weeds. Here and there a young beech stood warmly clad in a ruddy cloak to brave the frosts of winter; I believed these were enchanted virgins to whom the water-sprites, shamed by their innocence, had left the glory of their auburn hair. That afternoon I was depressed. Life, after a first fit of generosity, seemed suddenly to have become parsimonious. I was out of love. I had but a wan recollection of my Paris flame, and the young ladies with whom I flirted were become a little monotonous. At the age of twenty-four love is a very serious matter; to be without it is to be in the grave. I saw that instead of continuing to offer me a series of highly diversified adventures life was about to leave me to my own resources. She had paraded her stock of wares, and having fingered them once, the only grace I could anticipate was permission to finger them again. What a mere handful they were when all was said and done! I became lost in melancholy thoughts. My horse jogged on, Croquetin and Aimé trotted about me with their tongues hanging out; sometimes they turned aside to interview an attractive bramble bush, or sprang to attention when a pheasant whirled screaming out of the covert. For once I was not in the mood to fill my game-bag. We pursued our way without particular destination until we emerged from the forest near the meadows of Haut Monet. I rode into the village to obtain some tobacco, of which I found myself in need. Outside the farrier's I saw three gentlemen on horseback, dressed, as we used to say, 'up to the nines', gloves, boots, breeches the most perfect in the world. With them, ha! my



God ! with them, mounted on a black mare, was a young lady in a green cloth hunting-dress with tricorne and ruffles, whose incomparable beauty set me trembling from head to foot. I suddenly found business at the farrier's, and waited at a respectful distance from these counts and marquises, but close enough to command every detail of the lady's features and attire. I wore a baggy corduroy coat, workmen's trousers crushed into military top boots, and on my head a chasseur's beret of blue worsted ; but I was slim and refined of feature, and often congratulated myself that my sylvan get-up gave me an air of romantic distinction, as if I were a prince in disguise. The young lady looked at me curiously, and as a tribute to her I took off my beret and did not replace it. I was fully conscious that my curly golden hair was a weapon in my encounters with the fair sex. I met her glance ; my heart leaped like the morning sun out of a dark sea and the world was suffused with radiance. I knew at once that my princess was not insensible to my feelings towards her. The cavalcade almost as soon rode away, and, with absolute disregard for appearances, I threw myself upon the farrier and cried, ' Who is she ? Tell me in the name of God ! Is she married, affianced, free ! '

" ' Why,' said the farrier, who was a tedious man, ' how should I know ? One of the gentlemen is retired into these parts till affairs at Paris calm down. He has leased the Château of Haut Monet. That is all I can tell you.'

" ' Peste ! ' I cried, and rode home in a fever.

" That winter the marshes froze and everybody skated. Those who had not skates made themselves some sort of irons of the back side of stout knives, of barrel hoops, or any scrap of straight metal. The whole countryside gave itself up to amusement.

Even the gentlemen and ladies of the Château came over to watch the sport, which proved so irresistible that at length they joined in it. I had the good fortune to be a superb skater, and it was not long before I became a member of their party. With tact and discreet manœuvrings I instituted myself one of the immediate court of my divinity. She took no pains to conceal from me that I was the hero of the marshes, the only man she cared to have as partner. I was in a frenzy of happiness. My rival, the Count Delauny, a dark fellow of thirty-two, to whom she was affianced, was called away to Paris before long, the frost held, and my joy approached the dangerous climax.

“One particularly cold afternoon I decoyed the whole party to my father’s house; it was near the marshes, whereas theirs was a league away. We gathered round the fire, drank mulled wine, discussed the severe weather, and forgot we were cabinet ministers, old folk, and heroes. We arranged to have a carnival with torches. Under cover of all this gaiety and stimulated by the wine after the frosty air, I had the courage to declare myself. What of black-visaged fiancés! What of enraged parents! What of the fact that I had nothing but my heart to offer her! We discovered true love.

“From that day began the inevitable secret correspondence, on my part sustained chiefly in verse. I was a well-head of rhyme without reason. We conceived of ourselves as a woodland nymph and shepherd, and when the weather turned towards spring, arranged secret meetings in a little cave not far from the boundaries of the Château of Haut Monet. Not fearing detection from the castle folk, who rarely penetrated the plantations which adjoined the forest, or climbed the boundary wall into the wild woods, I lit a little fire and made a regular encampment deep in that

beechen dell, and furnished the cave with a couch of dried ferns and leaves. There on fine afternoons we kept house, and came to look upon ourselves as a pair of singular and attractive people, who had the courage between two o'clock and six to live the dreams of Rousseau. My horse, you must understand, I left at the farrier's, and, with my dogs and accoutrements, trailed a circuitous route two miles on foot to our woodland home.

"Ah, those delicious rendezvous! We read the poets, gazed into one another's eyes, brewed little messes on our woodland fire, and addressed one another as husband and wife. Our passion engendered a reckless philosophy admirably adapted to our wildest moods; and yet, in spite of our surrender to Love and his dictates, how innocent we were, how brave, how free of fear of consequences, how untainted with wise second thoughts, how immune from any worldly consideration in the complete abandonment of our hearts.

"There is only one conclusion to clandestine romances. Like the rose they bloom to their own destruction. I was bewitched by the woodland elves. Not content with afternoons of joy, I must beseech my love to come to me under the moon. One warm April evening I prayed her to remain with me till dawn. She wept. How could she refuse me anything, but that was quite impossible. I importuned her; she wrung her hands and begged me not to be cruel to her. Finally I commanded her to remain. This last in our peculiar situation was irresistible to her. She asked of me to permit her to return home that evening, and promised to arrange what I demanded for the following night. I acquiesced.

"The next day we met prepared to give no heed to the world until the cock crew, when like ghosts we must

creep back into the void of separation. The warm woods smelt of spring, spring fluttered in the undergrowth upon enchanting shafts of sunshine. Violets, forget-me-nots, primroses, a whole troupe of pretty flowers hid in the bright emerald grass amid last year's leaves. Oh, youth! Oh, joy! She made me a wreath of young maple leaves, bronze and sticky. I garlanded her with blossoms. We played the whole day away in antic childishness until the April moon wove webs of shadow through the silver glades. There, down beside a little stream that after a thousand sinuous wanderings gurgled under the bridge of Haut Monet, we spread our supper on a green sward, and after supper kissed. When the night wind freshened we retired to our cave, and—you laugh—I cocked my pistol, set my gun to hand like an old campaigner, and bade the dogs keep guard at the cave mouth. That night, instead of holding a lovers' discourse, I told her of the wars, exalted the soldier in me, and talked of grim scenes, of my cross, of heroism, and death. The recollection of dangers past drew us near, and a solemn passion attended our felicities.

"Patience!—I near the end of my tale. We slept, but towards moonset I awoke. A dark figure stood in the entrance to our retreat. I saw the dogs rise up and bristle, growl low and move about the intruder, ready to spring at his throat if he so much as moved a hand. I recognized the lean silhouette of my bride's father. I surmised that he was out against us with a search-party. For the moment my dogs had him under control. Should I declare myself, and hold him with my revolver to protect my life from his spontaneous fury, or trust to the darkness of the cave? I took the former decision. I raised myself with infinite care and, pistol in hand, approached him. I addressed him as if he were a tramp.



“ ‘ Take yourself off,’ I whispered in a feigned voice. ‘ I want none of your sort peering into my affairs.’ ”

“ He stared at me like the devil. Suddenly I feared he might whistle. ”

“ ‘ Have the sanity not to attract your companions,’ I cried. He recognized me. ”

“ ‘ Name of God ! ’ he ejaculated. ‘ Lieutenant Hypolyte Regnier.’ ”

“ A wild foolishness seized me. I quoted :

‘ Hé bien ! Votre colère éclate avec raison,  
J’aime à vous voir frémir à ce funeste nom ! ’

“ ‘ Where is my daughter ? ’ he growled. ”

“ My foolishness mounted. I replied again from Phédre in the words of my unfortunate namesake :

“ Devais—j’en lui faisant un récit trop sincère  
D’une indigne rougeur couvrir le front d’un père ? ”

“ He began to exhibit a fearful rage. ”

“ ‘ What farce is this ? ’ he cried. ”

“ ‘ L’hymen n’est pas toujours entourré de flambeaux,’ ”

I continued.

“ ‘ Villain ! ’ he screamed, and yet with care to moderate his voice as he saw the situation and desired to prevent a scandal. Moreover, my weapon was inconvenient. ”

“ Et la chaste Diane, et l’auguste Junon  
Et tous les dieux enfin, témoins de mes tendresses  
Garantiront la foi de mes saintes promesses ! ”

I went on calmly.

“ ‘ Imbecile ! coward ! ’ he cried. ”

“ ‘ Say rather,’ I suggested “ je vois Hypolyte, Dans



ces yeux insolents je vois ma perte écrite," but do not call coward one decorated on the field for valour. I am as ready to defend my honour as I was to defend my country.'

"How long this farcical encounter would have endured I do not know, but, as the dawn was showing in the east, I saw a necessity to put an end to it.

" 'Enough of this,' he said, also afraid that the situation would soon be the object of curious eyes.

" 'Agreed,' I answered. 'Go home, collect your forces. Your daughter shall breakfast with you. Disobey me and I will tear your honour to rags. Your daughter and I have a sounder philosophy than that founded upon the conveniences.'

" 'Immediately I see the force of your suggestion, monsieur,' he answered, choking with rage. 'But this is not the end of this affair.'

" 'In that we are agreed, monsieur,' I replied. 'Good morning.'

"He went. I watched him over the crest of the dell and then, exhausted, entered into the cave. My wife was awake, white with fright. I threw myself down beside her and explained the situation. I suggested an elopement. Alas! we discovered that the air in which we had spent such delightful hours would be our only sustenance. We wept at the knees of the gods. There was no other course but to give ourselves into their hands. At daybreak, therefore, we parted and prayed that Heaven would bless our nuptials with a child through whom we might be reunited. In the gay first hours of an April morning I assisted my love over the boundary wall of her demesne, and watched her go for ever out of my sight. For ever, yes! Heaven was not complaisant. The moon-elves brought us no nuptial gift. The ex-cabinet minister, thankful to have recovered his daughter,

gave out that night had overtaken her in the woods, and having no use for my name for any grandson, married her shortly to the black-haired lover, who removed her to Paris and surveilled her correspondence.

" I also came to Paris, gave up life, and buried myself in words and other men's fancies. I hung my accoutrements on a nail, wrapped my cross in silver paper, and became the model of a broken-hearted bachelor."

Regnier's life ended with that catastrophe, we are to understand ; but we do not do so. Our Regnier sprouted from the tomb of that young Sylvador, or, if you prefer, the moon-elves brought a changeling child to the unhappy lovers, and hid it in a whimsical moment under it's father's, not its mother's, heart. The changeling has become an old man in a yellow-flowered wrapper, who seeks in a thousand ways to recreate in this dry world the atmosphere of the lily-leven on which it once frolicked under the merry stars. Certainly Regnier, with his humorous delight in humanity, his childish love of oddities, his passion for cats, and birds, and flowers, belongs to the Good Folk. He is naturally vain of his human exterior, has a conviction that he is not old, and likes to be thought of as a man-about-town ; but watch him in the Prefecture smelling the fragrant hay, see him prowl among the cherry saplings for sale along the flower-markets, note his interest in little children, and you will see that his soul is really rigged in elfin green, and that at dusk he itches to be away stealing the thickset cream in a white moonlit dairy.

CHEZ BARBIER

*July 2, 1921*

Ha, Girrard ! you literary know-all, sapient astrol-

oger of men's eyes ! I have made a discovery, I have found a new harmony, the resolution of a chord that has hung upon my ears for a long time.

I spent the week-end at Deroder's château, with Dekker, Barbier, Harcourt, and Mesnard, and as you may suppose we indulged in an orgie of instrumental music. The sun shone by day, the moon by night, clouds drifted through the blue firmament, the lake glittered with a thousand gems, the trees waved in a gay delicious wind, and each afternoon and evening Dekker, Barbier, Harcourt, and Mesnard joined in sublime quartet.

They played and I sat at the window gazing over the park. Music and green trees ! I experienced something I could not formulate. I became possessed of a two and two that would not make four. I watched the wind in the trees, and it seemed no common wind. The clouds also, which had drifted all day long in aimless vagabondage, progressed now in stately order, as if with nymphs at helm.

"See the whole Hellespont whitening to my oars."

What a thing is memory, Girrard ! I had quoted that line to a woman once upon a time at Ostend, of all places. We two were dining upon the terrace in view of the sea, and the band was playing the overture from "William Tell." Music and the sea ! The waves had seemed to break in rhythm with that restaurant band. Was Orpheus at Ostend ? Was Orpheus among us here ? Or is it always thus ; has music an imperial power to change the key and time of nature ?

Why, yes, the texture of the air itself is changed in quality, and all the colours of the earth and sea are modified mysteriously in tone when even a poor hurdy-gurdy winds its melancholy horn.

But let the monkey-man pick up his orchestra and make off home, Girrard ; and before the echo of the last shrill serenade has left your brain, the wanton wind will have utterly confused the Orphic harmony.

## THE VORTEX

*July 12, 1921*

The Press accuses me of reaction.

Me voici un peu Deraingé  
Je ferai le bric-à-Braque.

God's Masterpiece fell into the hands of Cocteau and he presented it to the public. And the truth ? Truth lives at the bottom of a lie.

I went down to the Café de la Paix to meet Jourdain. It was night. Amazed that I possessed an intention the houses drew themselves up and laughed at me. Their white shirt-fronts expanded in merriment at my foolishness. I, Marichaud the insignificant, climbed the significant isosceles of the Avenue de l'Opéra conscious of Free Will. I was alone. A thousand people, a thousand vehicles entangled their tracks about me, but I was alone. The street was as blank and bare as the beam of a searchlight. The moon shone. Black shadows conflicted. Half a discordant tree in the circumcised rays of a lamp. Gone ! A face high up at a window, a memory. Gone ! Traffic, confused, angular. Gone !

I approach my vortex the café, the vortex therefore, of the world of the universe as seen by ME. I step from the apex of the street into its cross-purposes. My vortex and I are coincident. I am the centre of a vast wheel ; the mechanism of life is apparent.

Behind a huge red beard two small green eyes peer at me, the eyes of a merry snake in a burning bush.

"How are you?"

"How do you do?"

Jourdain! Whence! Whence hither! From what far radiation of consciousness!

From the Antarctic.

White tables and a block of ice press upon us like icebergs. At the same time I smell coffee and see a fair white shoulder. Here all consciousness entangles.

A table presses above our knees; the hard ridge unites us like a printer's bracket. The menu, wine and something in the nature of late supper. The vortex of food. The table is covered with hands; mine, the waiter's, Jourdain's, all different colours and sizes. Jourdain is immense. His hands are purple against the white cloth. He is a Gaul; gigantic, childish. He breathes trade winds. He can throttle a Latin such as I with his naked hands. But he has small eyes, and his brain is not essential to his happiness. My reputation strikes him as a miracle. He possesses none of me, although I possess his yacht, his wanderings, his beard. I travel his two years' distance in two minutes.

Jourdain has been after whales. Disgusting, a whale's interior. Men with common spades dig a square track in its hideous white abdomen. I see the spectacle from this café. I see the red interior of a white ship simultaneously. Saloon passengers. I feel nauseated. Jourdain heaves the table when he moves his knees. Here everything is registered.

The noise of people talking bursts into my brain, the confused noises of the café. The movement of the café makes me giddy; a million movements of the past and future eternally mingle with those of the infinite present. I am overwhelmed by the stifling atmosphere thick with motion. The light obliterates the small flame that I call myself.



This is not Paris.

Those who know the world better than I assure me that this is neither Paris nor life. I must learn to be a snob. The food is excellent, but I must not eat it. It is the food of the children of Ammon. Here are men, here are women, here am I, here is Jourdain, conversation, noise. If not life, it is a good imitation. The men eat, drink, move, that is sufficient. It pretends nothing. The Da-Da-ists pretend Nothing. Which sense is the most admirable? I am no judge.

Jourdain has the open air ; I borrow it from him and lose the café. I am surrounded by darkness. Through a circular space in it I see the sea. I hear the noise of the sea. The sun is brilliant. Islands rise out of the sea. I understand the illusion of colour. Light is positive ; colour is positive, not inherent ; darkness is inherent and negative. Colour is shy, even in southern seas. Though positive it is not absolute. Degree in assertion is the art of colour.

I emerge through my hole and walk on a smooth lagoon. The stars are beneath and above me ; I walk between two heavens on thin glass.

The dark crescent of the new moon, tipped with silver, encompasses the wide lagoon. I step on to her thin shore of beaten silver.

The sun rises. I am among broad leaves and see the broad limbs of women bathing in a pool of thick shadows.

Intemperance ! The god of all Heros.

I turn about, I eat. A thick bright-coloured laziness overcomes me. Taviuni, Fotuna, Amargura, Vavao, Hapai ! I recollect the waspishness of civilization. Content !

Evil is a relaxation, good an effort. I moralize before the self-evident. Jourdain is a physical effort.

A mountain gave him birth. At his birth a protuberance of the earth sank down.

I am an artist. My power of selection is perfected. Men credit me with Originality, with Invention. No Man has the power of Invention. Illusion and Discovery are the parents of so-called invention.

Jourdain speaks ; I think.

He has the voice of Nature. I have the brain of Civilization.

He understands the temptation of Faust. He would sell his soul for youth. I understand the redemption of Faust. Faust ultimately stood before God.

"A Christian native is a filthy devil," he says.

Christianity and the savage morale, I think. Civilizations cannot mix. To mix two civilizations is to destroy both.

"Leave him in peace," says Jourdain.

Bald-spoken, huge, and orthodox in a one-man fashion, is Jourdain. As a progenitor he would be a tyrant. The burden of progenitors. I have discarded mine. The experience of our fathers is useless to us. The world evolves. Religion enjoins obedience to one's progenitors. The Feugeans cook their grandmothers. It is an essential of their economy. "Better a live dog than a live grandmother." Dogs hunt, grandmothers eat. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

A glass of wine obliterates everything. The act of drinking annihilates the universe. I am a man drinking. I am conscious of effort, taste, and a liquid descending into my interior.

I am tired, I am self-conscious. My loins itch ! I scratch myself with my thumb, an unsatisfactory process through a shirt and waistcoat. I yawn. The world is a blank. The café is a blank. A sheet of white paper. I drink again, put down my glass finally a thousand miles away from me, and to my annoyance

see Jourdain still beside me, now, alas! whole and entire, unavoidable, boring, as "real" in the sense of the "realists" as a portrait by Manet.

I have lost my power of perception, I have ceased to be a "modern," I am an old-fashioned fellow that sees only what he has been accustomed to behold. I am an individual amongst individuals. I am no longer the centre of a universe. But I am singularly tired and must contrive somehow to escape from Jourdain's terrific physical vitality, and get home to my own company which is perfectly adjusted to my temperament.

*August 2, 1921*

#### AUGUST

It is August. The freshness of the summer is past, the dark green trees are fifty years of age, the dust is imperial. Yesterday I was the last man in Paris; to-night I am in the country, with nothing whatever to do but to lie under a tree and pray for rain. Yesterday afternoon I went into the Luxembourg Gardens, a desert stuck with trees of bronze. I had an appointment with Vernie at seven, an inexorable appointment that kept me behind in Paris when July was out. The gardens blazed with heat, the flowers withered in the ferocious sunshine, the formal lake gleamed like a sheet of hot steel. Men, women, children, dogs, chairs, perambulators, swarmed in the dust, as if they had been tumbled out of a prolific cornucopia. In the burning alleys the heat and smell were overwhelming. I went down to the sloping ground where the old men eternally play croquet. A crowd was there as usual. Clack! clack! went the wooden mallets against the dirty little balls. I felt out of it. Only shopkeepers with Albert watch-guards and old ratepayers with grey beards arrive at the dignity of croquet-players in the

Luxembourg Gardens. The ground is wretched enough, not a square foot of it is level, and the implements of the game have been in use since the time of Victor Hugo.

I leaned against the balustrade above the fountain garden and watched an elderly foursome through a gap between the red necks of respectable bourgeois. A good-looking young recruit with his tunic unbuttoned leaned beside me. A hot stench of garlic, sweat, and rank tobacco rose in the air from the stewing individuals about me. The recruit stretched his shoulders to open his coat, and heat came from him like a steam from an oven. He pushed his képi on to the back of his head, scratched his crown with his little finger, and as if speaking to himself said :

"What a farce ! The old rats curse as if they were at war."

"Does one curse when one is at war ? " I asked, without turning my head.

"Monsieur ! How should I know ? I have never been."

"Weather for a cool drink," I said.

"Certainly, monsieur," replied the recruit in a leaden voice.

"You prefer to swallow dust and watch the old gentleman ? "

"Why should I, monsieur ? " he demanded.

"What of Lambert's ? " I asked.

"Commendable, no doubt, to those who have the cash," he replied, without animation.

"Then let's get out of this. Have you any objection ? "

"None, monsieur, certainly," he answered, in his monotonous voice, and we made our way slowly from the croquet-ground towards the Boulevard Saint Michel. The recruit buttoned his tunic gradually, one

button at a time, on the sly, as if he were ashamed that I should notice it had been open.

"You are on leave?" I asked.

"Yes, I am leave," he said, and added, with contempt, "in August! It is a crime."

He settled into stolid silence and stared blankly in front of him, as if nothing in the world existed, as if he did not care whether he fell over a dog or a child, or whether he fell down dead.

In time we came to Lambert's and sat amid the unoccupied tables. I ordered iced Bock, and when it came we drank it without enthusiasm. I offered my companion a cigarette, which he accepted with mechanical respect. From time to time he nodded at passers-by of his acquaintance, but without a smile, without verbal greeting. The sweat ran steadily down his nose. As neither of us had anything to say, I leaned back and counted the stripes in the awning, and analysed the colours on its rich yellow underside. Time passed slowly; it was barely half an hour since I had left my house, and the heat was awful. A man and a girl came under the awning to drink syrup and flirt. She wore a large hat covered with ribbon, a short blue skirt, and a thin blouse. The blouse in places stuck to her hot red flesh. Her back was almost naked beneath the blouse and her neck was burnt. She sat very close to the man, who held both her hands, and twice he kissed her. We shall kiss and embrace, no doubt, in the heat of Hades.

They had a friendly quarrel at close quarters. The more they disagreed the friendlier they became. Since the recruit had nothing to say for himself I listened as well as I was able to their conversation.

"Ou bien l'attrait?" asked the man.

"Reveur! Visionnaire! Mage!"

"Ou bien l'hypnotisme?" he suggested.



“ Dis c'est le somnambulisme à propos ! ”

“ Mais pourquoi ? ” he murmured.

“ Ça anule la soumission.”

“ C'est original ! Ce Perrault il est aussi somnambule ? Dis ! ”

“ Ah, no ! ”

“ Si ! ”

“ Tu es cancanier. Tu fais toujours le loup plus gros qu'il n'est ! ”

I became concerned for the young man. He was a nice fellow with a sallow face, a black moustache, and immaculate white straw hat. He had not quite established his right to jealousy, his right to kick the absent Perrault down the stairs. The illegal marriages of Paris have their obligations and privileges.

Presently they paid for their syrup and went away and as the waiter was by I paid for the beer the conscript and myself had not enjoyed and also left the café. I went without any particular aim in the direction of the Panthéon, and my companion followed me with the adhesiveness of a cat that one has once stroked. We went into the Panthéon and listlessly inspected the wall-paintings of the lives of Saint Guinevere and Saint Joan of Arc by Puvis de Chavannes and others. The pale interior of that godless place dedicated to the petty glory of mankind was cooler than the street, and there were few people about. We sat down on a couple of dusty planks left by some workmen in the course of erecting a white marble monument to somebody. I began to be oppressed by the complete silence of my recruit and by his absolute attachment to me. To pass the time I examined the marble atrocity that reared itself in a tangle of sentimental white forms above us. My companion watched me and at last spoke.

“ It is pure and white,” he said.

"It is white but not pure," I answered.

Again silence. The recruit's neck seemed to swell against the top of his tight collar. He licked his lips and made a painful effort to control an agitation.

"Monsieur."

"Yes, my friend."

"Have the graciousness to permit me to speak of something which weighs upon me with the weight of this whole building."

"I am at your service," I replied.

The young man clenched the edge of the plank on which he sat, with both his hands. He looked like a sullen, dis comforted cockerel on a perch.

"Well?" I urged.

"The man and the woman in the café, you saw them?" He spoke slowly, thickly, as if his throat were swollen. "I went to find her this afternoon. She was gone. I am her lover. You heard? I am Jean Perrault." He lowered his voice; though monotonous, it seemed to fill the building, "'Tu fais toujours de loup plus gros qu'il n'est?' She thinks I am a wolf that will not bite. Monsieur, I tell you truly I will teach her and her somnambulist that I cannot be discharged in a public café when I am not at my own command. I tell you truly, monsieur, there is no doubt that I shall shoot her."

I looked the young man up and down. His rigid body gave me confidence that it would strictly carry out his intention. I felt no particular interest in his declaration nevertheless, his suffering stirred no superficial sympathetic chord. The heat made even tragedy seem leaden and fatigued. At the same time I resented this confession I had permitted him to make. *Que faire!* I felt as I contemplated his ridiculous rigid body that I ought to say or do something, but nothing interesting suggested itself to my thoughts.

The slow minutes passed in the heavy silence, until at length I dug a few words out of the tomb of my brain.

"Why do you tell me this?" I asked.

"How do I know, monsieur," he answered woodenly, and added as if the thought were torture, "I shall not find them for seven or eight hours."

Seven or eight hours! That appealed to me. I felt that I also had seven or eight hours to wait for something, something which made my appointment with Vernie seem unimportant. It began to be necessary not to pass time, but to kill it. I attempted a conversation.

"In plain fact, how shall this crime of yours mend the matter?" I asked.

"Justice is no crime, I must avenge my honour."

"We are told that evil acts bring their own punishment, that God is the avenger," I suggested. I began to think seriously that this raw, honest, very young man must be discouraged from shooting the commonplace young woman with the red back. Conscious of the feeble influence that one man has over the life of another, with a feeling of distaste and reluctance, I attempted to point out to him the futility and the arrogance of his intended act. I, Marichaud, who take my own affairs and the affairs of my world rapturously and with excitement, almost with delirium, to my heart, felt that I must now endeavour to realize that I was ten years older than somebody, and that I ought to give someone who was ten years younger than myself the benefit of my experience in calm and serious words. I felt responsible, and began a bungling lecture on the subject of man's right to judge his neighbours.

"We are told," I set off, "that we should judge nobody, and are forbidden to take vengeance against

our fellow-men. It is perfectly clear that as none but a divine judge can be acquainted with all the circumstances that attend even our most inconsequent acts, none but a divine judge can give just or adequate judgment. Who may understand a man's whole life but a God? Whether there is a God or none, neither you nor I have claim to set up as such a one. You will bring irretrievable ruin upon yourself, Jean Perrault, if in your arrogance you execute this girl in the name of justice. Apart from all that, though heaven knows I am not a wise man, it strikes me as foolish that you will go to this woman's house to-night and shoot her, and possibly her lover also, not on impulse, but with calculation."

"Calculation!" cried Perrault, and confronted me on his feet. "I calculate! What are you saying, monsieur? Do you imagine I respond to no calls but those of the bugle?" His control broke; he flashed into blazing excitement like a rocket.

"Sit down," I ordered, "before you set me up as a target in your shooting gallery. Sit down. Your strange attitude, your vehemence is attracting the attention of the nine or ten people in this place. Sit down on this dusty bench again, and out of common politeness permit a man whom you have placed in a delicate situation to irritate you a little longer."

Perrault's passionate cry left him dazed, stupid. He moved like an automaton and seated himself beside me.

"It seems to me," I went on calmly, "that this whole affair is an hysteria of ninety-five in the shade, that if it were winter your good sense would tell you that you will not educate women in the rules of honour by shooting one of them in a fit of jealousy."

"I am suffocating," said Perrault.

In truth, he did seem to be suffocating; his pink



face had gone very red, his mouth was drawn right across his teeth, and he laboured with his breath.

"In the name of God, let me alone—you strangle me!"

I felt as if I were strangling him, as if I were forcing an animal into a cage, away from its prey. I had no interest in its prey, and the animal was valueless to me, but its resistance gave me a determination to prevail. I smirked at my inconsistency. Allow me to differentiate between a captor and a judge, Girrard; permit me to smirk also, and understand me when I say that the more I endeavoured to turn this young fool's intention, the less I cared whether he slaughtered the young woman or not.

"If you attempt to leave my side," I said smoothly, aware now that I exercised a kind of hypnotic influence over him, "if you attempt to bolt, I shall create a scene and you may adjust matters with the authorities as best you can. I warn you that my word will stand against a thousand of yours. You must know that your confession has put me at a disadvantage. Now I return the compliment. Consider yourself my prisoner till dawn. At dawn your actions become again no concern of mine, and we part absolutely."

Perrault stared at me in amazement. He probably thought I was mad.

"Come, come," I said, tapping him on the shoulder to recall to him a sense of fact, "you must see how it is. I arrest you for the crime of embarrassing a stranger with your confidence, and condemn you to twelve hours' imprisonment without hard labour, to be served immediately."

Perrault glowered at me, incredulous, amazed.

"Get up," I ordered; "unless you prefer a night in the police cells, we are going home. I am not an



experienced gendarme ; I shall not feel sure of you until you are safely incarcerated."

He got to his feet, and we proceeded out of Rue Panthéon. He reluctantly dragged at my heels. A woman stared at us as we walked down that huge pale inconsequent interior, I in front, dark, lean, perhaps sinister, my young blue recruit sulking behind me. We emerged into the blazing sunlight, descended the steps, and passed Rodin's clumsy "Thinker," who seemed wearily to turn his heavy stupid head in our direction, and to turn it away again as if he were utterly tired of the incomprehensible ways of living men.

I called a taxi, and in five minutes we were in the hot trench of the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. We climbed up into my flat. The door opened and I stepped in amongst my carpets, chairs, hangings, pictures, and objects of art, which seemed to express their weariness of confinement in my house and to beg to be released. I longed for a cool wind to rush in at the door and scatter me and my possessions, my thoughts, my wishes, my prisoner among the eternal snows.

Petrushka handed me my letters on a silver salver. I put them in my pocket. Jean Perrault eyed this proceeding as something extraordinary, and I began to feel like the rich men in cinematograph dramas, who never fail once or twice in the course of a story to take letters from an obsequious servant with a salver.

"Petrushka," I said, giving him my hat and gloves, as if all the world were some day to have its eyes upon my actions, "it is extremely hot."

"Yes, monsieur."

"This gentleman is suffering from heat-stroke. Attend him ; he probably desires a bath. Offer him a suit of flannels, and in half an hour serve him with

a light refreshment. Allow him to repose himself till eight o'clock, and at that hour invite him to honour me with his presence at the dinner table."

"Monsieur," I said, turning to Jean Perrault, whose resentment had given place to confusion, "my apartment is at your service."

He bowed and mumbled something that I did not attend to.

I went into my bedroom, dragged off my clothes, put on a light wrapper, and threw myself down on the bed.

As I lay I began to wonder what it would be possible to say to Perrault at dinner, and felt bored. My antagonism to his summary execution of the woman was dead. Was there any such woman? Had I been to the Panthéon, the Luxembourg Gardens? Had I tried to wield the disobedient sword of Fate with my unskilled hand? The shadowy ceiling hung like a vaporous cloud above my head, the traffic droned distantly beyond the shuttered windows, my eyelids closed, my senses became deliciously confused, and I fell asleep.

I was startled out of the depths of a wonderful, irrecoverable dream by an ungracious noise. 'Perrault!—suicide, I thought' and jerked myself awake, "Blast!—blood and the police"—but the noise was merely occasioned by Petrushka at my door.

"It is six o'clock, monsieur. Pardon."

"Confound six and all o'clocks," I cried. "What do you wake me for?"

In the green shuttered light Petrushka looked sickly worn out, even a little tearful.

"Monsieur has an appointment."

"We shall be in the country to-morrow, my indefatigable Petrushka," I replied soothingly. "How is the soldier?"

"He has seven devils."

I laughed.

Petrushka took up that immovable stand-at-ease position peculiar to servants who mean to talk to their masters and liberated his tongue.

"If you permit, Excellency, I have seen this kind of thing before. When I was with Prince Pavel Stefanitch as footman it happened twice. One shot himself in the card-room, his blood was the same colour as the divan. Apart from the cloth being stiff you could not tell there was blood upon it. The other——"

"Do you infer, Petrushka, that our soldier has blown his head to pieces," I asked from the comfortable bed.

"No, Excellency."

"You Russian lout! Sometimes you forget you are now a Parisian. Go on."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, what became of Pavel Stefanitch's other suicide?"

"God preserve us all!" murmured Petrushka, "he took his life in the cloak-room, and when I went for the visitors' coats at three o'clock in the morning he fell out of them into my arms."

Petrushka sucked his teeth and stared into the past.

"Well," I said, "we must hold on to this one as long as we can, till dawn if possible. Perhaps his courage will come up with the sun."

"No," contradicted my servant flatly. "His mind has turned into a revolver. The mule has made up his mind; he is fixed like a tree to the ground. Ça!" Petrushka clicked his tongue with satisfaction. "There is a lot of flat earth in this world; all is one big platitude." After which obscure remark he sighed and asked me whether he should prepare my bath.

"Yes, prepare my bath," I said, and a thousand invading thoughts came suddenly from nowhere.

In five minutes I was submerged in cool green waters. The bathroom was faintly perfumed with garlic, and seemed to belong to Perrault rather than to me. "This great platitude!" Ho, ho! Petrushka, I have set sail in my bath across the great plains of this world, the plains of Russia, the immense Siberian bog, and there is not one little hill that I may ascend to review my fellow-men from. And if I sail my enamelled barque over the topmost peak of Everest, what shall I gain by it? Clouds! There is no panorama of men's foolish life except for the sight of the gods.

Vernie came precisely to the minute of seven. I dressed in a suit of lounge pyjamas and a silk dressing-gown, and interviewed him with the air of a Sultan of Turkey. We exchanged views in somewhat ornate language upon the politics of the day, spoke of the weather, wines, my visit to the country for half an hour, and settled our business in five minutes. I tackled Vernie with spirit and had him under my thumb in no time; our important affair shrank before Perrault's tragedy, which set beside a business problem, stood out with classic dimensions. When Vernie left me I was gay with apprehension.

At about a quarter past eight I sat down in the yellow dining-room. Perrault, dressed all in white, sat opposite to me at the round table, silent, pale, exhausted. Petrushka waited upon us with consommé, cold chicken, salad, fruit, and white wine. He winked at me behind the young man's back and demonstrated with his serving napkin that there had been oceans of weeping. Throughout dinner I said nothing. Tragedy was present, a joyous tragedy of the soul. I prolonged the silence until Petrushka left us with



coffee and cigarettes among the stealing shadows of half past nine o'clock.

My companion gave me my cue. He clapped his hands to his face and bowed his head upon the table among the débris of the repast. His coffee upset and ran in a dark brown stream across the white cloth towards me. It was the thick, sugared coffee of which Petrushka is not a little proud. I watched the man before me, I watched the coffee on its deliberate course, until its energy was exhausted some three inches from the edge of the table ; then, not without fear and a feeling akin to audacity, I said in a low voice :

“ Jean Perrault ! ”

He started, looked at me like a terrified animal, and cried huskily.

“ Monsieur ! ”

“ Perrault ! Perrault ! ” I went on, “ why throw away a unique gift you have possession of, called Life upon earth, why squander the astounding treasure of youth in a frivolous attempt to do harm to a woman who is not sincerely attached to you ? ”

Perrault became very red again and bit his bottom lip.

“ What advantage, material or spiritual, will you gain by severing her life and yours ? The woman can be of no consequence to you since she does not value your devotion. Shall you win her caresses in Paradise ? Shall you be master of her in Hades ? ”

He lowered his glance and stared at his hands, which he began to twist about.

“ And if, in your frenzy, you turn your hand upon yourself because circumstances do not exactly accommodate you, who laugh ? The gods, assuredly. If for the sake of this woman you sacrifice your life or freedom, you are not only a fool, my dear, but of all fools in this world the Emperor.”



Perrault raised his head and stared at me until I believe he must have seen the interior of my brain. If he had that pleasure, he saw seated there an idiot sincerely striving to help another, an idiot who had forgotten the rules of human isolation and the wisdom of holding off from his neighbour's life.

If he had spoken I should have saved my face. He remained silent, his lips glued tightly against his teeth.

Oh, tragic farce in which I had the part of Pantaloon ! My hero refused to speak his lines, and I was left with a situation that I could only boggle at, until they let down the curtain. As there was no one to render me this service, no curtain, in fact, to be let down between me and the disgusted gods, I threw up my part, lit a cigarette, and stared at the Poussin picture over the mantelpiece. The evening was more insufferably hot, more stifling than the day. We sat on in the dusky dining-room, in the thick velvet atmosphere of the hot night, until the blare of distant thunder trembled against the panes of the opened windows.

"We shall have a storm," I said.

Perrault made no answer.

The storm gradually came on. Petrushka hurried in to see that the windows were open, that the lightning might have free passage through the room and not stab us dead at table, and brought us candles, for he would not permit the electric light to shine in the dread hour of a storm. I turned my chair away from the table to get a better view of the elemental conflict. We were in the centre of the storm ; the lightning hurled itself about us, the house shook in the terrific vibrations of the atmosphere, the lustres clinked on the chandelier above our heads. Heavy raindrops spat and hissed upon the pavements and dried as they fell. There was not much rain. I became a little amazed, and wondered, like a man overwhelmed for the time

by a catastrophe, whether after this I should take up life where I had dropped it, or whether it had broken in the darkness, and I should have to grope about a long while to find the future thread of it. For an hour the thunder shattered about our heads and then passed over in low rumblings to the north. No cooling wind awoke behind it, no cooling torrent burst from the tortured clouds; it was a dry storm that brought no relief.

Perrault sat like one carved in marble, and I perceived that he had held on somehow to his tragedy through the last hour; perhaps rather, that he had not escaped from the embrace of his harsh mistress, nor from her loud monotonous endearments, nor from her insistent tightly strained emotion, for Perrault was in the arms of a bitter love, whose will cannot be gainsaid or broken.

Petrushka came in and cleared the table. The dining-room looked deserted and melancholy when the dark table was laid bare. I forbade him to remove the candles; it seemed to me crude to expose Jean Perrault in the electric light before myself and my servant. The candles shone about that pale stiff figure like watch-lights about a corpse. Ah, well! I rose and went to the window; perchance the temptation came to Perrault to pitch me into the street. I heard him sigh. The night was dark as death. I thought of death, of love the fantastic goddess, the incredible nymph, that changes a man's life with a glance, and with the tag end of her golden robe dazzles him to madness. I, ten years older than Perrault, also loved, with the burnished, beautiful passion of a man proud of his mistress and himself, sure that he has discovered the best that life can offer and ashamed of none of his heart's nights or days. I sighed with the sweetness of my thoughts; I sighed also, because

—impossible to tell, the cause of human sighs are obscure and dangerous to seek. I began to want to be alone, and with scarcely another thought to my companion, turned and went away into my study, and there, caught up on the wings of desire, flew a great way off in the darkness and suffered.

Towards midnight I retired to bed, and howled in my spirit with sweet and terrible torture.

How Jean Perrault passed the dark hours I have no idea. Probably he sat on until the candles guttered out ; probably spent the chill of night, if it were ever chill that August night, shivering where I left him.

Before daylight I slept, and woke again exhausted by a dream that had all the semblance and gave none of the satisfaction of reality. I lay listening in the sleep-shrouded house for a sound of life in the hot, weary city. I lay listening for a long while, for an hour perhaps, until a cock crew somewhere among the roofs of Montparnasse. Grey light began to steal through the latticed shutters. A cart rumbled heavily down the street behind the clack of a horse's hoof, and as I waited for the noise of it to die away, a dim white figure came to my open door, and stood still and silent in the black oblong of the doorway. It took up its position there as if it expected its presence to penetrate my dreams and wake me. It seemed to me the ghost of morning, and I fancied that if I didn't banish it at once from my apartment it would come often in the future to haunt me—tenebrous, fragile, emblematic.

"Who is there?" I asked, and my voice sounded harsh.

"I, monsieur—Jean Perrault. It is dawn."

"Yes, it is dawn," I said. "What of it?"

"I ask for my liberty, monsieur."

I stared at him, without answering him, so fragile, so unearthly did he seem.

"Have the goodness to give me my uniform monsieur."

I got up, wrapped myself in my dressing-gown, found and lit a cigarette.

Perrault did not move from his place.

"Monsieur, do not deceive me."

His voice quivered like a child's in an anguish of distrust.

I felt angry suddenly—cheated, defeated, a fool. To calm myself I stood in the middle of the floor and contemplated my cigarette.

"Monsieur——"

"Yes, yes, yes." I answered impatiently. Perrault withdrew. I had no doubt that he stood sentry outside my door. I crossed the room and rang the bell that communicated with Petrushka's lair, violently, rhythmically. In two minutes Petrushka, with his night-clothes bulging from his footman's rig, answered my alarm. He was unshaven and had bare feet. His bare ugly feet gave me an unpleasant, sordid feeling.

"Find that idiot his uniform," I snapped, "and serve coffee."

"Yes, monsieur."

He shuffled off to obey me.

When I had ascertained by the sound of various doors that the vestibule was empty, I went into the study and opened the shutters. Dawn swung into the room. Tired, bored in the prospect of another tyrannical day, oppressed by the emotions of the scarcely ended night, I scowled at the chimney-pots of Paris and gave myself up to a foolish cynicism. If I had been Nero I, too, would have burned Rome. I also understood why God, one summer's day, had

flooded the face of the earth. But, alas ! in a moment of weakness, God gave the Ark to Noah, and the Devil laughed and bided the going down of the waters, for Noah was a twig of the seed of the pippin that Eve ate.

Petrushka came into the room with two glasses of warmed-up coffee, and I turned my back on the obnoxious morning.

" Well ? " I asked.

" I have the honour to inform monsieur he's dressed," he said, in hushed lugubrious tones. " It's a case."

As he put the tray down on the table Perrault appeared at the door in his uniform. He looked seedy and unattractive. His eyes were red, and he seemed ill and exhausted.

" Good morning," I said, involuntarily using the subdued voice with which one accosts a mourner after a night of bereavement. " You will take coffee with me before your departure ? "

He came into the room like a man who has lost his soul. I handed him a glass of coffee ; he took it, but did not attempt to drink it. I tried to swallow mine, but at that hour it had a poisoned metallic taste. Perrault looked at me accusingly and put his glass down on the table. He made an effort to speak and failed. I gave him a minute's grace, but he was unable to deliver himself of any words.

I brought the farce to an end.

" Since I must keep my word with you, Jean Perrault," I said, " I must ask your pardon for detaining you at your inconvenience. As I have no right by our contract to ask you anything further, adieu ! "

I put out my hand. With great reluctance he gave me his, and we shook hands after a fashion. I motioned to Petrushka to let him out of the house.



Yet Perrault hesitated, the sweat beaded on his lip. It seemed he strove to ease himself of some torturing thought.

"Well, well?" I asked, a little impatiently.

He stared at me, moved one step backward towards the door, hesitated again, then drew himself up and summoned all his courage. Eventually with a supreme effort he said:

"Monsieur"—and swiftly lowered his glance like a frightened animal—"Monsieur, . . . thank you for your hospitality."

He stumbled out into the hall.

I drew in a breath of smoke from my cigarette.

"What in the name of the devil——"

The outer door shut.

"What in the name of the devil had he intended to say to me!"

#### IN THE COUNTRY

*August 2, 1921*

At last I am in the country, Marguerite; the unmentionable I am playing at Colin Clout in Normandy, while you and your tiresome invalid, God beckon her soul to Paradise, are perched upon an Alp.

Why are you not in my arms?

When the nightingale sings—in August it is the nightjar and the owl—when the rind of the old moon gleams faintly in the bright twilight, and the dark trees promise sweet ghosts, I dream that you are about to come by me; I even whisper your name, and in the little infinity between my dream and your dear presence, I find room for a vast amount of unarcadian discontent.

But for invalids, but for prejudice, but for separation, our union is the most delightful in the world.

## IN THE COUNTRY

*August 5, 1921*

Girard, I am at my country-house. Paul Barbier is with me, and if you were not stiff-necked in the matter of the railway fare you also would be here.

I have forgotten my work in four days; I have lost my town habits and my town personality, and am become the perfect landed proprietor. I feel a person of consequence, although my estate is not of any size.

I am sentimental about this charming place. Grand-père Bretagne gave it to me when I was ten years old. They call me "Little Bretagne," and it pleases my vanity. I am eager for you to come down here; I am eager, since you do not think it worth the trouble of a long journey, to tell you the most trivial news of my house and garden.

There is a shortage of water. The ghost has been seen again. Every apple has a grub in it. My bailiff's servants have already quarrelled with Petrushka and Jacques Joubet, my chauffeur. The milkmaid slapped the farmhand's face in the presence of Jacques Joubet yesterday. Petrushka has introduced himself to everybody as Monsieur Kozavkin, and claims to dine with the bailiff and his wife, who, to tell you the truth, are really a caretaker and a cook. In order not to offend their dignity and to avoid a separate ménage for Petrushka, I have had to appoint him my secretary. I have sent Joubet to the inn to solve the difficulty of his status. Apart, therefore, from feminine intrigue, and bloody battles on that account between the males, I at last have hope that there may be peace.

But in spite of human waywardness it is quiet here,

and I am delighted to be in this old salon again, face to face with great-grandfather Jean Bretagne, who stares at me with hate from the cod eyes of his portrait. He is horribly ugly. His eyes, his red hair and whiskers, his pale flat face are reproduced with deadly accuracy by an unskilled artist. If his portrait were not his one means of expressing his dislike of me I should burn it. He hates me because I am neither a banker nor a Bretagne. He bears me a grudge because I am descended from him through a woman. I never met him, he never heard of me, but we are antagonists.

I am the bouquet of a number of dead virtues and vices. In Paris I forget my forbears, but here it is eminently correct to recollect them, at least the Bretagnes of them. The Marichauds have neither merit nor memorial in these parts, except my father, Eustace, who is remembered as my mother's husband, and for the sake of his water-colours, one of which, to my shame, hangs at the inn. Do you recall him? He had a watery expression and was the most elaborate fool in Europe. In summer he used to come down here and ruin many a pleasant spot for me by "recording it on paper." He inherited the vice from his mother, who was the feeble daughter of a feeble artist. My other ancestors on that side are Alphonse Marichaud, the wealthy oil merchant, Henri Jacques Marichaud, the charbonnier, who begot him on a Jewess in a fuel shop, and the Revolution who begot Henri Jacques on La Belle France, along with innumerable other ragamuffins.

Of all these good people there is only one that I ever loved besides my mother—Grandpère Bretagne, my mother's father, son of old Jean over the mantel-piece here. He made only one mistake in his whole life, and that was to marry my dear mother to the

silly son of his crony, Alphonse Marichaud. I adored him. He satisfied my childish idea of a grandfather. He was rich, he was a splendid man of business, he was witty, shrewd, and dignified and not in the least like me. I inherited nothing from him but his money, his love of life, and a certain practical ability. From my very earliest days we were friends. Even when I was a little boy he treated me as a man. It is owing to his good advice and goodwill that I have made anything of the gifts which I reluctantly admit are come to me from the Marichauds.

I am an expression of all the Marichauds. If ever I get a son, I have a suspicion that he will have cod's eyes, red hair, and a pasty face; that he will be modelled exactly in the image of this hideous old tyrant of a Bretagne above my head, whose posthumous hate of me is so palpable and so peculiar, that I am convinced that he will revenge himself upon me by this means for being at present his master.

## IN THE COUNTRY

*August 12, 1921*

They still cut the corn in these parts with a sickle, Marguerite, and the harvest is still a family affair and a thing to be thankful to God for.

Paul Barbier and I fell in love with the rich red corn, and the reapers, and the flat Normandy cider, and went a-reaping yesterday. I imagined that you were with us binding up the sheaves with your tender hands. Contact with the corn generated in me a Pagan piety, a simple and pure feeling, and for a little while I became certain of the nobility of labour. I forgot that there is no difference between the toil of cutting corn and the toil of making a statue. I seemed to be

engaged upon a wonderful piece of work, and had the illusion that I was now for the first time a creative being, that I had liberty of action, and was in an actual way necessary to life.

At mid-day we sat under a corn shuck and ate and drank with the peasants. Their shyness destroyed my conceit. I saw that it was impossible for me to understand their labour unless I possessed their poverty. I was ashamed. Poverty is sometimes a possession, Marguerite, and though all sane men prefer to be without it, all wise men know that it will buy a number of things for which wealth is not legal tender. I suddenly felt that I understood Tolstoi's desire to identify himself with the peasantry. I also understood exactly why he had never satisfied his desire in the full sense, and had an uneasy conscience. He was kept by civilization. His peasant-life was not a life won from Fate, but the self-indulgence of a man who has many varieties of life at his command ; and mine also, even if I gave away all my money and ate but what I earned would be the same : it would be my choice of many choices, one that would have cost me my whole resources I admit, but still my choice, not something thrust upon me that I would gladly have foregone.

#### IN THE COUNTRY

*August 19, 1921*

Girard, I have a country story for you.

The other day two rustics had a quarrel, and the one made an end of the other with a butcher's knife. At the inquiry before the local authorities, whom legend makes the strangest caricatures of God's image that ever sat upon a seat of justice, it transpired that the survivor was simple-minded.



The witnesses were legion ; every man, woman, child, ox, ass, dog, and cat in the Department seemed to have been in at the killing, but whatever testimony was offered had no weight against the tears of Pierrot's mother, who, because he was her sole dependent, was allowed to take him home with a long wordy sermon on the keeping of him out of further mischief.

Poor Pierrot therefore got drunk that night at the village inn, in honour of the law, and poor Charlot who "fell on a knife by accident and died therefrom," was buried for his faux pas.

## IN THE COUNTRY

*August 30, 1921*

## THE MULBERRY TREE

The mulberries are ripe on my splendid mulberry tree. There is a golden gloom under its sweeping branches. The fruits glow like little red lamps.

Louis Simone swears that it was mulberry leaves that Adam made him an apron of, and that it was mulberries, not apples, which tempted Eve to sin. He is mulberry mad. He and I sit under the tree and listen to the going of the wasps in the upper branches. They have a nest up there, but I have not the heart to smoke them out.

"We should have girls here," he says.

"The foxes, the little foxes and all the birds of the air!" I cry.

It is the world-tree of ancient mythology.

"A girl in a lupin-blue dress," says Simone. "I am heart-sick."

I laugh. Louis Simone loves stage settings for his little affairs. I am persuaded that he enjoys a kiss more when the moon is full or new than at the quarter.

"Why do you laugh, you queer devil?" he asks.

"You are a dramatist!"

"But the tree! But the leaves, close as tiles on the roof! But this yellow gloaming! Have you no needs?"

"Many, but not of the moment. My heart is in safe custody."

"You are inhuman."

Louis rolls over on his back and stares up into the tree-top.

"To be human is to be perfect," I reply.

"True. How few of us are men," sighs Louis. "Women, women, women! They tear men to pieces. Limb from limb they tear them. They even rend heaven and earth in their madness like a pair of household sheets."

"You are certainly in a bad way!" I laugh, and reach for a particularly fat mulberry.

"I? Why, no. I am recovering."

The mulberry breaks in my mouth with a sharp, wine-like sweetness. It has bouquet. From the taste of it one knows that it is red.

"What have you ailed?" I ask, and choose another mulberry, afraid that it may not be as perfect as the last.

"The price of a good woman is beyond rubies. I have no rubies, and certainly nothing more valuable," says Louis.

"Solomon said more wisely," I retort: "the heart of a fool is at his left hand."

Louis rolls over on his stomach and begins to hunt insects on the grass. His white clothes are blotched all over with mulberry stains. He looks like St. Sebastian after the martyrdom.

"You are stained all over with the barbs of love," I say. Invariably I become pompous when I talk

to Louis. I am conscious of disadvantage in his presence, of a slight paralysis. I bear him no grudge on that account. His frank conceit, his childlike absorption in his own affairs amuse and delight me, and the slight artificiality of my manner with him does not in the least affect his perfect confidence in my admiration of him.

"The devil!" Louis twists his head and surveys his speckled body like a leopard. "Yes"—he turns his attention to the grass again—"symbolic, yes, of my condition. Wounds many, but none severe. God! I long to be a great lover, but I am only un *amant de l'après midi*. Alphonse! Love is a destructive pleasure. I wrote my last play under the influence of a female. It is full of vulgar passion. I promised myself it should be a modern Divine Comedy. I forgot that Dante had lost Beatrice before he wrote of her, that he had never possessed her—that, that, that, exquisite art is born of contest, of longing, of desire, which have a restraint that is the contradiction of satisfaction. If love satisfies, if the moment is perfect, it evokes no words, scarcely a memory; only the fool adds an epilogue. I am the fool who attempted to add an epilogue, and for my pains I see that I was able to do so because I am an abominable lover."

I lean against the trunk of the tree and contemplate Louis's ruffled head, and suddenly I realize that I am part of one of his little scenes "The Confessions of a Disillusioned Lover." The whole of Louis's body expresses his consciousness of the situation. He has forgotten that he is not handsome. I swear that in his next play a mulberry tree will harbour two fools.

"But the woman whose price is not rubies?" I ask, deliciously amused.

Louis stares up at me. "I speak figurately."

"Of course," I reply, unable to resist the innuendo.

Louis looks startled, blankly surprised. "Is it possible," he thinks, "that Alphonse sees through me." But he is no coward, he is no fool, he will turn the tables on me in the end if he can.

"You are out of the game," he says.

"Brilliant!" I cry. "But will it carry? Will it get across?"

Louis springs to his feet and assumes a nonchalant air.

"One does not introduce the comments of the critic into the farce, Alphonse."

He picks a leaf from the tree and begins to dissect it, pauses, examines it, throws it carelessly away.

"But, seriously," he begins, "am I the man—am I the man for a complicated passion? Have I enough classic, epic, heroic force? Have I enough realism, enough comedy, enough self-control?"

A mulberry falls to the ground and Louis deliberately crushes it with his foot.

"I know, I feel intellectually—here!"—he clasps his hands to the sides of his head—"the most exquisite passion, symphonic, superbly balanced; but when I am on the parquet I suspect I am commonplace, I suspect that I am stupid, I suspect that I flounder, that I am a bungler; in fact, I know that I am a mere Jean-Jacques."

He picks out a cigarette, hits the end noisily on his case, and lights it. As he lights it he speaks; a telling moment.

"I am an Epicurean," he says, and flicks out the match; "alone I appreciate the subtleties of the game—on paper. But intoxicate me with love, and the arts desert me. I throw down my lute, and cut an odd figure in a race against time, who has no intention of overtaking me."

"The æsthetics of love!" I ejaculate.

"I am Paris himself at rehearsals. Here, under this tree, I believe in myself as a protagonist in the finest drama in the world. Give me this tree and a woman! And see what a fool I shall make of myself. I am all very well for those who have no refinement, no sense of dialogue, of situation. I can kiss. When I get to the kiss I am more than a woman can want; but I have no variation. I love dialogue. I love situation. I delight in the amenities of a beautiful setting. The hour inspires me beforehand, with splendid wit. Beforehand, I have unparalleled moments created by my cunning tongue. What have I not made in my thoughts of the instant when we realize one another, of the instant of recognition, that beautiful moment sentimentiously called the dawn of love? Alphonse, I am to be pitied. In spite of myself I am a mere wolf in love."

"The fact is, you are a coward, Louis," I say, and seat myself on a low bough of the tree.

"How am I a coward?" he demands.

He does not in the least care what I say of him so long as I say something.

"You are afraid of reality."

"Afraid of it?"

"Ignorant of it."

"I ignorant? Marvellous! You do not know what you are saying. Reality and I are twins born. I have never had the good fortune to escape the harpy for one moment since these eyes recognized what they saw. I am sick of reality, my dear man! I want art, art."

"Ha ha!" I really laugh now Louis has begun to talk. He has forgotten the scenic effect. I have touched him on the raw. "You know the common facts of life too well perhaps as facts, but their value you have destroyed by your dreams."



"I destroy the value of reality? Are you mad? Reality gives me a blow every day of my life. My God! have you lost your intelligence? I am sick of reality! Look at my wife! There is reality! Look at my debts! There is reality! Look at the hideous dullness of my love-affairs! There is reality! Look at me! Here is reality! If nature had given me a face, limbs, stature, I might be less bitter. These are my assets, my dear fellow—these and a lack of confidence in my powers of conversation. These are what are ruining my career. I am an artist on paper, by myself, with you under this tree who do not matter, but in life I am the veriest dodd. I am dull, I am an ass, I am a freak."

"Ho, ho, ho!" The bough that I sit on sways. "I say," I reiterate, "you do not understand reality. You set up an image and bow down to it. You say, 'I will be that.' We cannot be that. We must make ourselves out of actual moments, out of reality. There is the hitch. You exhaust your strength before you enter the arena."

"You are right," says Louis, calming down. "You are perfectly right. What am I to do? One cannot take lessons in this sort of thing. It is not fencing."

"A dozen witty women from Paris," I ask, "to exercise you in the preliminaries of the tender passion?"

It is one of Louis's charms that he takes nonsense seriously. He leans against the tree, bites his lip, and thrusts his hands deep into his pockets.

"When it comes to the thing itself, should I profit by that, Alphonse? I am splendid till my heart is affected. The truth is I am too genuine, too good, too honest. I should rage to think of the wit I was wasting on your mannequins. 'Il me faut des princesses.' In the most literal sense I need a princess.

I want a great love-affair with a beautiful woman whose name has a resonance."

"Princess Valeska perhaps," I suggest.

"She frightens me dumb. There you are! I lose all my powers when that woman appears. Yet here, even now, I can think of marvellous things to say to her—things that would absolutely frighten her out of her senses, amaze her, make her faint, send her down on her knees like the Queen of Sheba; but bring her here and I should fall over my feet, I should sit down and leave her standing, I should eat mulberries. Her title alone if she were not beautiful even would disorganize my entire intelligence."

"Your experience——" I urge.

"Experience! I have a vast experience. I am the most accomplished man in the world—in two halves. I can act, I can speak, but never at the same time, never on the same occasion. I have said everything in the world a woman can hope to hear, to myself as I ride in the metro., as I sit alone in my study. I could say it to a servant girl who would not understand a word of it. I must have control of the whole situation. The trouble is I cannot collaborate. I have to invent both sides of the conversation, and see all the pretty actions with my own eyes. I am under a curse. I am the wittiest man in the world and get nothing for it. Even on paper, in my plays, the fine edge of my wit is blunted. I have the most sparkling conversations with absent women——"

"You should make love to a phonograph."

"If it could penetrate my silence, yes."

Louis looks at me wildly, with despair in his eye. He is enjoying himself vastly. He is enraptured with his failure in love. It gives him a splendid sense of identity.

"I am extraordinarily sensitive," he says, in

apologetic tones; "atmosphere murders me. A woman with one look can disperse all my glorious thoughts like a whiff of smoke in a gale."

"It is astounding that you ever succeed," I remark.

"Succeed!" cries Louis, piqued; "I cannot fail! I am passionate, and I hate it. I am a wolf. It was unnecessary of God to give me the form of a man. I gain nothing by it. I am a drone to the Queen Bee. But I cannot even fly! If I had some gymnastic accomplishments it would lend charm of a kind to my invariable success; but I dance abominably, I cannot manœuvre a horse, I am not an Olympian at tennis. I cannot even carry a tea-cup with distinction at a tea-party. I am a cave-man, the most elementary buffoon in the world."

Louis subsides into contemplation of his savage character, and I call to mind his women acquaintances. They like him. His desperate seriousness and his anxiety flatter them. His gaucheries amuse them. They love his frankness and naturalness, which make the most comic comedies out of his transparent passion for "good scenes." His conceit, I agree with them, has a peculiar fascination. His adoration of calamity is irresistible. Louis has the good fortune to be loved for himself.

But I dare not tell him this. He would garrot me, and my blood would mingle unpleasantly with that of the fallen mulberries; my ghost would dwell an unbecoming tenant of this charming arbour.

IN THE COUNTRY

*September 9, 1921*

I have no news for you, Marguerite. I do little more than sleep, eat, talk, and walk.

On my walks I frequently visit a small wood some way from here, full of little paths that give me a feeling of intimacy with Nature, that make me fancy she retires there when she is not engineering sunsets. Briars, thorn bushes, spindleberry bushes, finer than those on the Pincian, foxgloves as tall as I am, dry yellow grass that rattles with the seed pods of many flowers when the wind blows, and slender trees of many kinds already tinged with autumn colours, make my wood a delightful retreat for me, while the innumerable rabbits give my dog good sport.

I imagine that I go there to think, I have the illusion that meditation is the favourite child of solitude; but when I get there I become as busy as my dog with I know not what, and talk silently but without ceasing to myself.

"Ah, what a fine foxglove! A late bee in it! And an oak-apple up on that branch as large as a plum! How lovely the sky is through the leaves of that tree! Simone has found a young lady in the village. This gun of mine is useless! I have lost the taste for killing birds. I prefer eating blackberries in this wood." And so on, until the afternoon turns over on to her other side, and misty nothings begin to steal about the glades. Then I go down to the stream where the moss is green, and perhaps meet your ghost there; but though I try to rake up sentimental feelings, and even attempt to speak to you of love, my tongue merely recites for your benefit, a catalogue of the wood's perfections, until to silence it I light a cigarette.

In the rich glow of evening, my dog and I set out on the long walk home, up over the long rough hill, down the long valley. "One hundred and three, one hundred and four, one hundred and five." The fool is so witty that he is counting his steps. I stop and

stare at the sunset. What gradations of yellow! Artists, I believe, prefer a subtler scheme of contrasts. The shadows mysteriously creep over the hills and under the gilded trees, and I suddenly burst into a plaintive song, and walk on a little bemused in the ancient splendour of the evening.

And when I am at home again, and Simone and I take supper together in the lamplit room, an exquisite feeling comes over me, my dear, as if I had been very far away, and had spent the whole day in your company.

#### IN THE COUNTRY

*September 21, 1921*

You write to me that you have begun a "natural novel," Girrard. What is "natural"?

I have been so long in the country, the weather has been so unvaried and dry that I have lost touch with ordinary life, whatever that may be. Day after day the sun has shone from morning until evening, night after night the sky has been bright with stars. I have begun to feel that this is the splendour of eternity. I am very old without being aged. The trivial things of every day have a classic quality. Pain is forgotten except as an artistic contrast. I am become one with the sun, with the earth, with the trees, and go about feeling like a Greek hero. I am three thousand years behind the times, a contemporary of Helen, a friend of Achilles, an old Pagan whose long hair gleams brightly with fine gold; and such is my remoteness from your world, Girrard, that when you speak of a "natural novel" I am puzzled and can only imagine that you are faking an Iliad. No literature can seem natural to me but an Iliad, a tale composed by time and no man.



Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*October 1, 1921*

"Paris sera vide sans moi."

Jerome declares this to be my motto, Girrard.

It is true that when I am away from Paris it ceases to exist for me. I think of it as a theatre scene taken down and put away until the moment comes for me to appear on the stage again.

Well, I am returned. The scenery seems perhaps, a little more banal than usual, and I have, as is only natural, somewhat forgotten my part ; but in a week I shall be playing Alphonse Marichaud again with the old assurance, and my taste will have readjusted itself perfectly to my surroundings.

CHEZ BARBIER

*October 3, 1921*

Marguerite, I am here again in Barbier's grey studio. There is a dish of figs on the Chinese table. I have a suspicion that these figs are come to have their portraits taken or I would eat them.

It is as hot as June, although the air has an autumnal tang and the garden is strewn with the yellow leaves of the plum-tree. The sparrows are chattering in the little garden, and a blackbird perched upon the pergola is congratulating himself in song that summer has forgotten her customary date of departure.

Alas ! alas ! Marguerite, you also have forgotten your customary date of departure from middle earth. It is almost a year since we stood under the trees of Meudon together. It is almost a year since my happiness in you was perfected. Does an enchantment bind your feet ? Does pride forbid you to dispense too freely the perfect happiness which it is

in your power to give? Is your love seasonal, like the love of Persephone for Pluto? Or do you hesitate to come to your infernal lover until the dark days of winter remind you of your duty to him? I am more patient than Pluto. I await your word before I drive up to your front door in a black cab and snatch you away from your sentimental mother; but my patience is almost exhausted, I am about seriously to claim my share in you. You have eaten fatally in my dominions, and therefore you shall ultimately return to them. Indeed, Marguerite, I am secure of you; there is no excuse which will serve you in the end; a stronger bond than promise binds you to me, you are the victim of a relentless fate. Even I am unable to release you. I take an exquisite pleasure in your helplessness, although I am in no better case. Ha ha! my faithless, charming, fair princess, as the patricians said of their faithless wives, you are damned to the infernal gods, and this one in particular to whom you are allotted, is impatient of his good fortune.

In truth, Marguerite, I am as restless and disturbed as a widowed tom-cat. Write to me that you are coming soon, or I shall buy a seraglio to spite you.

*October 4, 1921*

#### THÉ DANSANT

Sometimes I grace a tea-party, especially in the autumn, when I feel more able to encounter women's conversation than in the spring. In October, when the Luxembourg Gardens rustle with dry leaves and the sky is opaque blue and white like painted china, my scattered passions combine and consolidate, and I really become a man, whereas in spring I am all to pieces like a clock taken down for repairs. Towards the close of the year I am a finished creation; my

sense of power is at its height and I know what I am about. By December I am a little stale, by February mildewed, in March I fall into decay, in April, May, and June sprout rampantly. During July I cut my crops, throughout August I mature. Early frosts put the finishing touch to me, and by the time the leaves have changed to the colour that suits my complexion I am in excellent health and excellent spirits and ready to be amused by anything.

Yesterday I went to a *Thé Dansant* high above the traffic in the *Rue Raspail*. My host, who was suffering from a boil, had his neck tied up in a cloth, and looked very stiff, my hostess had frizzed her short hair into a yellow mop and wore a taffeta silk dress, short, shapeless and of a distressing sepia shade. I was the first guest to arrive, and we three sat in the anti-chamber round a polished table that I dared not touch, and talked about the latest publications. I brought a little present to amuse them.

Poor Christofe Martin dared not laugh for fear of agitating his boil.

These people belonged to the middle class of art ; that is to say, they were neither "poor devils" nor yet had more than talent, but their talent was good class and they were intelligent, honest and kind. Martin held art classes and his wife taught dancing. They were both about thirty years of age, short, square, and young according to the fashion. Martin was as black as night, with a square sallow face, and Camille round as the moon, with round rouged cheeks and childish grey eyes. They kept their house clean and had nice furniture in this little boudoir ; on the parqueted floor a persian mat, rose red silk curtains at the window, and a large mirror in a narrow gilt frame over the low mantelshelf, that reflected us and the few amusing pictures, the dark furniture, a bowl

of autumn flowers and a piece of the opposite houses, greenishly.

Somebody else arrived, and we went into the salon, which had been cleared for dancing, a low old room with two french windows. Martin had been busy with his paint-pots on half the walls, and among primeval cabbages and blue banana trees, naked men and women of a byzantine ugliness reposed, or bathed, or wrestled. The new arrivals, whom I did not know, came evidently from Rio de Janeiro and complimented Martin on his wall paintings, with a Spanish grandiloquence, then the man, dark, neat and handsome with a serious manner, sat down at an harmonium and without any further ado, played some Spanish Airs intended for the guitar which wheezed out sadly from the little instrument.

Camille's sister came in more wonderfully like a barrel with a fat angel's head than even Camille, and went over to Señor Laspallas. I was amused to see how perfectly these simple people had adopted the manners of this decade, which I have never possessed. They were as disjointed and bizarre as a picture of Severini's, praised everything odd, and kept as far as possible away from Orthodoxy and convention, and in their dictionary had blocked out any word that recalled either the Impressionists or the Sentimentalists.

More women came with little skirts and frizzled heads, doll's complexions and heels as high as Parnasus; and a few young men strolled in, their chins shaven blue in accordance with the masculine fashion which has thrown beards into the dustbin. Gone were the crimson and azure ties of yesterday and the Garibaldian freedom. Straight ties, tailored shirts, and hour-glass waists made of them trim hermaphrodites. Dark, and thin, and unhappy they looked amongst the flourishing women with their unconfined charms.



Spain was evidently waxing in these folk's affections. Señor Laspallas was the hero of the afternoon. Spanish tunes were put on the gramophone, and the austere young gentleman showed a slow-timed Spanish dance that went against the music in stiff, severe, difficult measures. We all assured him that such a dance was our ambition and our despair, and twisted our feet in imitation, but arrived at nothing more than discomfort ; then at last our manners were exhausted, and we danced as they do anywhere in Paris, all of us except La Sœur de Camille, who kept Laspallas gyrating and explaining, demonstrating and complimenting in a corner.

Presently a dirty personage arrived, evidently of the old school. His hair stuck out unevenly, his clothes were loose and sloppy, and he turned a disdainful eye upon our antics. I was introduced and given to understand that he was a considerable poet. Alas ! I had read none of his works, though he knew my statuary. Alas ! also, he took it for granted not only that I was aware of his literary splendour, but that I despised the corybantic fool that I was making of myself. He detained me in a window, and we talked seriously of art. From Baudelaire he had reacted to the severity of the new school. He disdained now all that pretty morbid stuff, and wrote grim things about trains and drains and his own wicked thoughts. In a word, having removed the grace of Baudelaire he presented his ugly facts without adornment, and would have nothing to do with accepted rules. For him the latest cacophonous experiments of Stravinsky were the only possible music. Everything must be direct without any pandering to human weakness. I'd do well to be more severe and carry on the good work of Brzeska. Purity was essential ; we were on the way to attain the last height of expression before the



absolute, and so on—much nonsense, much wisdom not his own, until we were called to tea.

I and this maestro, who was so highly esteemed that he was exempt from frivolity, were placed together. He ate vastly. I also enjoyed the magnificent collation; tea it was not, but a dance supper perhaps, with wine for those who did not care for Orange Pekoe. Ha, well, the conversation became serious; we discussed people I did not know and work that I had never seen nor heard of. Albert, a mysterious creature who was absent, had his absent convasses compared with such incompatibles as El Greco, Goya, Picasso, and Roger Fry. Who was Roger Fry? I felt an *ignoramus* and endeavoured to exchange a word on dancing with Camille. She answered me politely and leapt back quickly to Albert.

“Who is Albert?” I asked her in a half whisper.

Then she was kind and talked to me, told me he was a creature of great promise and daring, and that the second picture from the window in the little salon was his.

She charmed me. Her great round face was kind and honest; she was so enthusiastic and genuinely polite that I could not help but love her.

After tea I made her show me Albert's endeavour. It was kind, simple, and honest too—a cock-eyed vase and a few gaunt weeds, easy to laugh at, but I did not laugh, for in it, as in the Martins, was hidden a genuine attempt to find new truth, to live to the best advantage sincerely and without jealousy or fear. I am a worldly sinner beside these people. In their presence I feel that my work is pretentious and overgrown; yes, even my work, which is severe and simple as a rain-washed stone. I come away from them with new ideals or different ideals, I come away scraped of a thousand barnacles I have gathered in the deep seas,

and in order to regain my sense of proportion have to dig out my old motto :

‘For the genius any manner, for the plain man the manner of his day.’

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS  
*October 7, 1921*

Dekker gave a recital at Numero dix on Monday, Girrard. He was at his best. In the Kreutzer duet, unfortunately, the man at the piano played like a kangaroo, and only by a miraculous effort did Dekker preserve the unity of the music. Jean Briand alone had the sense to compliment him upon it in the Press, and to suggest that Messieurs Erards’ instrument took undue advantage of its opportunity. The rest of the critics accused him of misinterpreting Beethoven. Well, let that pass, whatever the gentlemen may mean. In the Mozart, fortunately, he was his own master, and with the finest tact of a fine musician put aside his own personality and permitted Mozart to make the most of his services.

The days are past when I could listen to music with amazement. Through creative experience I have lost the gaping hero-worship that I used to bring with me to concerts. Now when I hear fine work, instead of surrendering myself to the pleasure of listening, I begin a comparative criticism between it and my own creations ; and although my trade is static, and music is in a sense kinetic, it enables me to understand my own intentions, to see my aims, to readjust my values. Good music played without affectation or conceit is the finest critic in the world.

For all that I think I regret the days of ignorant rapture, Girrard. They were part of the price I had

to pay when I became a serious artist. True, I have gained an ability to appreciate beauty of technique ; nevertheless, I think I envy the man who does not see behind the scenes ; he enjoys the pantomime as I shall never enjoy it again.

If I had not inherited this passion for creation from my Heavenly Father, I sometimes feel that I should be more human, that I should have a greater sense of my existence, of time, and of place. Girrard, those who attempt to imitate their God are in grave danger of losing their birthright in the world He made them.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*October 9, 1921*

Heavens ! Petrushka has given notice. What shall I do without Petrushka ? Having become used to a Russian servant how shall I get along with a French one ? I imagined myself superior to domestic troubles.

I secretly believe that Petrushka is not what he pretends to be, but is really Vladimir Ivanitch in another situation, and I have often feared that you and he, Marguerite, would elope to Florence leaving me a thesis on my character, a polemic on the vice of being a sculptor, by way of farewell letter. He tells me that he is tired of my white footmarks on the carpets, and though I have promised to wear goloshes in the studio I do not believe that he will relent and stay with me.

I am really frightened. It is impossible to dream of work, and if I go out and drown myself in pleasure I shall never return for fear that Petrushka has left in my absence. Imagine my desolation when he has departed ! The electric bells will mock me with shrill unanswered laughter, dust will creep in silently

and settle slyly down in the absence of its old adversary, and my clothes will lie all over my room like corpses on a field of battle deserted by the chaplains and the Red Cross.

My agitation is so great that I cannot even finish this letter. I will go and find that miscreant, double his salary, beat him, show him that I do not intend to have the theories of Bolshevism practised in my house. He is my indispensable slave, an adjunct of my genius. If my life has to continue without Petrushka, I swear that Petrushka shall continue without his life.

Petrushka has consented to remain with me on condition that he may import a wife. I hope they will be economical in the matter of children. Heaven help me, I am about to become a family man!

*October 12, 1921*

C'EST CHARMANT, N'EST CE PAS !

Here am I sitting on the garden steps of the Petit Trianon, alone but very content. My companions have retired into the woods for a little while to commune with Nature. I prefer to bake myself in the October sunshine like a lizard and wonder why I ever shut myself up within the dark walls of Paris.

"C'est charmant, n'est ce pas !" A woman with a bronze silk umbrella emerges upon the little stone terrace behind me and lets off the same phrase a dozen times to a widow lady, and every time she sighs. "C'est charmant, n'est ce pas ! C'est charmant !" and the bandbox of a palace becomes quite self-conscious.

The lady with the bronze umbrella is chattering :

"It is quite touching ; so small, so innocent, so gay—it is incredible that they guillotined her. See how small it is, darling, how touching, a little doll's house. It's charming, isn't it ? I could cry ! The past always moves me ; one can imagine everything. Poor child. Really this is a little girl's fantasy. It's charming !" and so on. They pass me on the steps. I am a tripper possibly inebriated ; they take no notice of me ; they feel very superior in their expensive clothes, quite superior even to poor Marie Antoinette whose pathetic ghost watches them from an upper window. But it is getting too hot. I rouse myself and go up on to the terrace, and with a feeling of shame, as if the palace were really inhabited, I try surreptitiously to catch a glimpse of the interior through the dirty French windows. I ascertain that there is nobody within, and with that boldness which is so cruel to the past go up and press my face against the glass. I was too lazy to see "over" the place with a guide. There are one or two pieces of furniture in the deserted room, and one or two pictures on the white-stained walls. Both of the doors are open, I see a room beyond—melancholy, empty but for a pair of mournful chairs ; through the other door I catch a glimpse of the bare stone staircase. Ah, well ! nobody lives here now. Americans and trippers describe a figure through these empty rooms with their shuffling feet, like a problem in geometry, and for that privilege they pay a franc. I turn away, descend the steps, and wander down the little grass lawn to the Grecian Salle de la Music at the other end, and there lie in the shade like a sentimental sot and wait for the ghost of Marie Antoinette to pass across the black windows of her empty bird-cage and frighten me out of my wits.

"C'est charmant n'est ce pas !" The woman with the bronze umbrella and her companion emerge from



one of the little alleys and stand close beside me appraising the building from this point of view. I listen because her voice compels it. It is not a sweet voice.

"And what a pretty terrace, darling. I do not believe that the poor child was executed. How delightful the weather is! She became a mother in this charming abode. What a shelter for innocent love. Have you read Jules Montmartin's 'Autrefois'; he absolutely creates the whole scene; it's charming, with the Sèvres milkpans and lace aprons. He has the grace only to hint at the coming terror. Here is the Salle de la Music where Marie Antoinette took Mozart on her knee and called him a pretty little fellow—when he was a child, of course!" She tittered. "She gave him sugar plums. They were all children. I love to think of it. It's charming. The loves and the two doves in the little fountain there typify innocence. I cannot think of sin in this place."

"It was built for Madame de Maintenon," says the widow lady, who is, it appears, also a little weak in history.

"Nonsense, darling, Louis Seize built it for his bride. It is impossible to associate it with anything else. Imagine a moonlight night and all those pretty figures in the garden. It's so much nicer than Versailles. You know the façade there is a quarter of a mile long. I always think of those souls in Hades—Louis Quatorze and his Pompadours and the poor Swiss Guard. They stood nobly by the King at the Revolution. Ah, it's charming! It costs twenty thousand francs to give a display of the fountains."

I laugh out loud as I lie in the grass, I am not entertained. The woman is too fat, and her bronze ankles bulge out of her fashionable shoes; but I laugh

nevertheless a peal of theatrical mock-laughter. It is the best I can do on behalf of the past.

The loquacious lady looks hurriedly in my direction, whispers something to the widow, and, screening her face from my impious gaze with the bronze umbrella, moves away. But even I am not real to her. She is unable to be afraid of me. She is above me in a different world, in a world where such as I appear only in the police news, the hero of sordid facts which can never intrude themselves into the boudoir of her life. She walks away slowly and in half a second is chattering again.

"C'est charmant, n'est ce pas!" Eternally and for ever charming. And out goes she—out of the garden into a fiacre, a charming drive, a charming supper in the gloaming, a tramride back to Paris in the warm twilight, her flat perhaps not quite so charming, her tired husband a little less so, a domestic scene, verging upon the unpleasant, shrill on her part, the triumph of woman, rather of unbridled shrillness over the weary flesh of man; a final duel between the sheets, domestic reconciliation, a moment of domestic felicity, and by way of thanksgiving ode to the Deity, the self-congratulations of a woman who believes herself the charming heroine of a tedious tale—"C'est charmant, n'est ce pas!"

I roll over on my back and laugh honestly this time. What a comedy! Ho, ho, ho! But the blue sky spreads above me quite serene, and the breeze rustles unamused among the autumnal trees, and the Salle de la Music stands as silent as death. A strange regret steals into my heart. I stop cackling and get to my feet subdued; but the temple of music remains dignified, aloof, and I pass out of the garden to seek humbler groves curiously abashed, as if I had been delicately snubbed by some great lady for infelicitous behaviour.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*October 21, 1921*

Girard, I am unable to work. The splendid enthusiasm that I brought back with me from the country is dried up. The objects in my studio weary me with their hard blank eyes. All my former work has lost its significance, and the marvels that vaguely haunted my mind have made off into the darkness. I soil my hands with clay nevertheless, and botch at something that I do not recognize as mine, so little relationship does it seem to bear to the heroic attempts of the past. Hope suggests that it is a man asleep under a May-tree, but in truth it has little meaning for me, and is probably in reality no more than a characterless mound of mud.

My health is superb. I am inclined to believe that to have sufficient courage to sustain creative power one must be a little morbid. I am far too sane at present to subject myself to the mad concentration of genius. The fine weather and my good health are antagonistic to imagination. It seems more profitable to enjoy the sunshine and the things of this world—conversation, beer, parties in the Bois de Boulogne at full moon, or picnics at Versailles—than to shut myself up in the stifling workshop and attempt to squeeze effigies of dreams out of my finger-tips.

Yet when I attempt to give myself over to these joys, unsatisfied desire envelopes me in a black cloud. I am moody and remain at home wrestling with a shapeless idea. When I am at Versailles I can see nothing but the inchoate lump that defies definition in my studio. When I am at home I see nothing but the shining windows of Versailles. I am like a door that will neither open nor close.

Perhaps, however, I shall have the good luck to catch an autumn influenza, and when the pride of

my dull animal strength is a little abated, my creative consciousness may regain its empire over me, and this mass which at present stirs uneasily beneath my hands may then perhaps arise in recognizable form.

*October 31, 1921*

#### FATIGUE

Last night, after many days of benumbed foolishness, I threw my life out of the window and ran away from the angel of impotence that had lodged himself in my house. I ran away for five hours to Chantilly to see Dekker, who has retired there because for the time being he has not a farthing. Somebody has lent him an old dilapidated house, and a garden confused with weeds, and he is cultivating the garden and a passion for solitude until his income feels better or he is tired of pulling up nettles.

It was a beautiful, a luminous, night, but yesterday I hated beauty. I was ill of a surfeit of beauty, and as the car sped swiftly along the straight St. Dennis road, I wept hysterically within my soul because I was not, as I so frequently imagine, immune from the disintegrating sickness of despair. If we had driven through the deeps of heaven, along the Milky Way, or through the slums of hell, it would have been all one to me last night; the hero in me was dead, the Emperor in me was exposed, defeated, his last vain Hundred Days were over, I in my pride was No More.

On my thirtieth birthday, a day for which I had long prepared myself in secret, I determined that I must begin to consolidate myself, to cease to fly hither and thither, to shut all doors of egress to my soul, and proceed en masse through the future. I was to begin my life upon the harvestings of thirty frivolous but not unprofitable years. But either the rats have



eaten the harvest, or I am not strong enough to lumber forward like some great snail, with the burden of these years upon my back, for I find myself as confused as ever I was in the past, and that reckless courage which has driven me onward, finally to the edge of an abyss, last night forsook me and I found myself staring down into nothingness.

We came to Chantilly, and the car drew up in front of Dekker's hermitage. The moonlight shone white upon the dilapidated stucco of its walls, and upon the huge gourds that he rears along his garden fence, and cast foolish shadows from the pollard limes across the neglected gravel.

I sent the car to the Belcourt garage. Overhead the misty stars gleamed in the pale sky, and a way off beyond the house a tangled copse of hazels and old apple-trees half-tempted me into solitude. God! give me an escape from the inexorable demons of dissatisfaction which walk even in the pallid stare of the moon's wry face!

The front door opened before I had so much as crossed the weedy gravel. Two dachshunds streamed down the steps barking deliriously, and Dekker, with a black silk handkerchief stuck in the neckband of his shirt, welcomed me. He looked handsome and romantic in the moonlight. He is in the Kriesler tradition, but more clipped.

The two dogs, Dekker, and I went within the house, his voice sounded pleasant phrases in my ear, his hand rested affectionately on my shoulder.

The house smelt musty; plaster was scaling from the walls and there was a sense of many empty rooms. He led me into his study, a long parqueted salon on the ground floor with many windows. The dachshunds rushed jealously into their chairs. Dekker offered me a red rep sofa with walnut facings and himself sat



down in an old gilt arm-chair. There were neither curtains nor shutters at the windows; the stars watched us, the moon shone brightly in, the dogs' green eyes, the candles, the perforations in the stove door gleamed about us. Dekker's violin lay on the grand piano; he had a grand piano, and a great old bed with red rep draperies. On the walls hung a confused collection of paintings executed by his acquaintances, a very blue Remmy, a nude by Charleroi. "*Femme qui m'aime*," I think. The left leg haunted me from his last show. I caught gleams of several "*Natures Mortes*" of all schools, marigolds certainly, Barbier's "*Frêles Choses*," one of Lefanu's Javenese abortions also. Near the stove hung Zouchy's "*Fiction*," a fine picture, next to a horrible "*Pont des Ambassadeurs*," and alone by itself, as if it were especially prized, I made out one of Degas' hat-shop fragments.

Dekker's gallery of Moderns had failed chiefly to accommodate itself to the earth's gyrations. Most of the pictures hung as if their centre of gravity were at seven o'clock. That soothed me. Even the pictures here were free to please themselves. I thought of the sinister caretaker I had left at home.

"It is delightful to see you," said Dekker.

On a table in a south window a row of various apples were set out to mellow, and I was aware that many pears took shelter in the sofa packing.

"I am charmed to be here," I answered.

We both became a little shy, uncertain why we had come together. We had never visited each other privately before but we had always met in a great crowd. I had no wit, no news, no joviality to offer Dekker: in fact, I had nothing whatever to say; yet I was suddenly conscious of a fine and delicate pleasure in my heart, an emotion that is not often entertained.

Dekker asked me with some embarrassment whether

I would have a glass of wine, and with the greatest difficulty in the world I said, "Thanks, yes."

He went to a corner cupboard, and I watched his shadow move about the walls and ceiling. Perhaps because I was exceedingly fatigued, he seemed to me a little more than real. He got out a couple of green glasses, fashioned like Blücher's boots and decorated in gilt and enamel with the Strasbourg coat of arms. Flish! Flash! Two diamond rings on his right hand sparkled in and out like fireflies. He poured some wine into the glass boots and came close to present one of them to me. I heard him breathing, and felt vividly that he was flesh and blood. I was shocked. I looked up at him, made an exclamation, took the glass from his hand, and said, "To your genius!" and drank.

"Your good health," replied Dekker, draining his glass, and fled out of the room. The dogs followed him, and I was left alone. I felt absurd, naked; fatigue had skinned me before the eyes of this man I hardly knew. I had no time for rehabilitation. Dekker came back almost immediately with a cheese, slices of pumpkin, and a loaf.

"I have not had supper," he said. "Will you join me? Messieurs les Chiens and I live frugally. Heigh, Rousseau! Heigh, Polidore! The cheese has not much rind. 'Nor the rind has not much cheese, papa!' So says philosopher Rousseau. Patience, little ones!"

He put the things down on a stool, exhorted the dogs, whose lips curled with anticipation, to forbearance and self-restraint, and set up a little folding table between his chair and me, which he spread with the title sheet of Mozart's Opus 19, and from his corner cupboard laid covers for two: that is, two chipped Sèvres cups, two common plates, pepper, salt, sugar, knives,

and a harassed lump of butter. When everything was set out he began to make coffee in a retort and to hum a tune, until at last, blushing with embarrassment, he found something more to say.

"I am in retreat here for the winter. My accounts have their extremes so infinitely protracted that they almost meet!"

"You are fortunate in having so charming a cave," I answered.

"It has amenities!" he went on; and before we had time to feel that that topic was exhausted, he picked up a yellow book stamped with blue umbrellas, and tossed it over to me.

"Have you read that?" he asked. "I knew Hertzman before the war. That's his ridiculous 'Wo Ein Kleine Maus.' It contains one man, one woman, one howling gale, one room, one bed, one pillow with one button, one pair of stays, one candle, one small mouse—all of Prussian manufacture. When I finished it I exclaimed, 'Alas! Alsace, but for thee I also had been entirely of Prussian manufacture!'"

Dekker's mother was a Prussian.

"It's Greek to me; I had a poor education," I said. This was a lie but it served.

"What is education but a disease!" cried Dekker, who knew that I lied. "My father was a schoolmaster. He kept his whole family on benches. Education is a swindle. Nine times out of ten it swindles you out of a big lot of life."

The coffee boiled and we sat down to supper.

"I love life," he went on. "The transiency of the whole affair gives me a heart for it!" He wagged his knife over the butter. "You know, when I was a boy I thought my father had been on earth since the time of Cæsar Augustus, and that I was destined to pass two thousand years in our dull town. The future

was my nightmare. 'Damn you, think of the future!' There's my father for you. He worshipped the future—a goddess who dispensed calamities that might be mitigated by present toil. He died like everybody else without meeting the lady. Do you know Mierstein?"

"I have heard of him as the only man who will listen to Smirnov's opera."

" 'Masha,' you mean?"

"I do not know. Masha Smirnov, or the Opera 'Masha'?"

" 'Masha, wherefore do you linger by the window?' It has a title as long as a summer's day. I tell you earnestly," said Dekker, "it's a lovely work—too beautiful, too long, too melancholy, too full of sensitive people for Opera House tenors. We give it every Sunday night in Mierstein's drawing-room—fragmentarily, of course. It's a lovely thing, like a piece of beauty of no particular shape fallen out of the sky. It changes like the weather. Mierstein has an unflagging enthusiasm for sound, but he does not know 'The Marseillaise' from a tom-cat's howl. My dear man, those Sundays! Ha! You don't know what art is until you have thirty Jews on their knees gaping at you. Moreover, Papa Mierstein's gilt drawing-room is hung with Doré pictures.

"Doré tout oré," I said, and Dekker laughed. The wine had at last warmed me.

"But the sting in all that is," continued Dekker, "I hope my father knows that Mierstein keeps the wolf from my door. It will exasperate him superbly. I hope he has a sentient ghost. It is my one reason for supporting the theory of post-mortal existence. You must have heard that child's tale of how old Mierstein 'found me,'" he said, looking up from his slice of pumpkin.

"I remember it vaguely. You were at Maraquita's."

He returned to his pumpkin.

"Yes, with beautiful Marie Blé, 'who slew all other women for me,' and big fat Pratz of the stomach."

"It's years," I said, "since I heard his song of the Injured Husband—before the war."

"'Pourquoi est-tu si presée, Clotilde?'"

"The same."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dekker, and I felt like a chronic invalid in the presence of a very healthy man.

"You know, after my father's death, I made my mother send me to Bauer. Kitty Finn kept house for Bauer in those days. That's long ago in the historic past, before we had a war. Nobody knew why she shut herself up with Bauer, except possibly, his pupils—not I, I assure you. In Leipsic they called her 'Dull-man's joy.' First Packhard, then Hoffman, then Bauer who was lazy to a disease." He smiled radiantly, and put one arm akimbo, and I felt he was a geniune pleasant fellow.

"Ten years ago!" he exclaimed, and helped himself again to pumpkin. "Have some more coffee."

"Thanks."

"Kitty Finn liked arranging the fates of young men. She called herself 'The post office to the future.' 'I've had my good time,' she used to say, although she was only thirty-two. 'Now I'm just a post office.' Well, but for Kitty Finn—who knows? She sent me to Paris with a letter to Maraquita, and in those days I was proud to play in the orchestra at the Morque. For two weeks only. I enjoyed the Morque until Marie Blé pulled it to pieces for me. I was a simple youth. I had been an old old man in my father's house, but outside it I became a babe. Until Marie



took Maraquita off his pedestal and showed him to me I thought he was a hero. Authority was a thing of great solidarity to me. I attacked it violently, without conviction, and I was always surprised when it toppled over."

Dekker got up and moved the table. We turned ourselves to the stove and began to smoke.

"You have heard about the scene?" he asked.

"Bring it to my recollection."

He got up and put Blücher's boots and the wine bottle on the floor between us.

"Right!" he said, settling down again. "You remember the old Spaniard's 'scenes'? They were a great attraction to the Morque until he realized it and organized them. Well, this one was natural. Marie said I was drowned in an orchestra well, and that Maraquita or no Maraquita, I was to up and show that café what I was good for.

"One night, after she had sung, before fat Pratz appeared, I gave a solo on my own initiative. The devil! I played superbly! Crash! A dark body rushed upon me; I heard shouts and a scream. Hwitt! I found myself on the pavement. Fouquet had hold of my shoulders and Louis Simone was mopping my face with a bloody handkerchief. I heard the words, 'Genius!' 'Challenge!' 'Hero!' 'Summons!' My pride swelled to enormous dimensions. 'Give the old animal my regards,' I shouted, and the street went whirling round me. 'Bravo!' 'Hear! hear!' Stinking pig!' cried several voices. Somebody said, 'God! Mierstein would pension you for life if he knew, 'To Mierstein! To Mierstein!' cried everybody. But, ha, ha, ha! nobody had met him.

" 'Serenade the old devil,' somebody suggested.

" 'Right,' I cried, and staggered to the edge of the

pavement. My fiddle, strange to say, was in my hands—two strings gone; but what of that?

"We had to look for Mierstein's address in a Directory. Fouquet naturally consulted the one at the Morque while somebody hailed a taxi. That drive is a blurr."

Dekker ran his right hand over his hair.

"No, we cheered as we drove across the Place de la Concorde; the open space, the lights like the Pleiades, went to our heads. Are you bored?"

"No, no."

"The Champs Élysées! I was put out on to the pavement. 'Above Charrons! Above Charrons!' shouted several voices. I went giddily up the pavement and looked at those white buildings, voluptuous in the June night. I felt a fool then, I can tell you."

"Voluptuous white buildings, that is good." I interrupted, merely to hear the sound of my own voice for Dekker's wine was enlivening.

"Yes," he answered, "you can imagine how small I felt when I began to serenade the great flats above Charrons. I had the whole Champs Élysées upon me in three minutes, and out of the middle of it stepped a fat man screaming, 'Du Chenie! Du Chenie! Montez chez moi je vous brie!'"

Dekker stopped.

"And then?" I asked.

"Why the old fairy-tale—genius in the gutter, you know. Mierstein treats me like a son, and when I get outside my allowance I have to creep off and pretend I need solitude. I don't like to ask for money. A little over-sensitive perhaps."

I was excited now and hot, and I must of course put in my reminiscences.

"Did you ever see Wentworth Royce at the Rotonde?"

"I never go to the Parnasse Rotonde," said Dekker.

"He's a man of ideas," I continued, with dogged perseverance. "He cheats at poker."

"A type," said Dekker, who was no listener.

"And lives in a room in the Impasse Z. Once upon a time he was a Mexican bravo and hopes to die of opium in China."

"Perfect," said Dekker politely; "you assemble him unerringly."

"And tells nasty stories about Mexican vice."

"Ha, ha!" Dekker laughed. "Continue!"

I had him at last.

"Swinburne's wandering soul lodged with him at one time. The idleness of Genius is now his mistress. Under her tyranny he rots."

"That's beautiful."

"He was born to the Muse, but, alas! illegitimately. The laws of poetry forbid inheritance to him. He is not unlike myself in appearance. Will you understand me? To-night when I came in here I felt that his demon possessed me."

"I thought you had a burden upon you," said Dekker in his most quiet tones, "you entered the house with so serious a mien."

"I was extraordinarily discontented. I came to see you to escape despair. Let me speak; I must relieve myself. My critical faculty has got a disease; it is either supremely alive or dying, I don't know which. I have begun the strangest piece of work—a perfect mud-pie of a man asleep under a May-tree. I suddenly hate my former stuff, my usual work. There, you have it, my work has become stereotyped and I fail when I try to escape. But I will say no more. Play me something for God's sake."

"My felicitations," said Dekker, who did not move. "I think you are in an excellent way; you have the bellyache of progress."

"Do you remember Charleroi?" I went on, glad and yet astonished, that I had exhibited my condition to Dekker. "Of course that thing is by him."

"Well, what of him?"

"A few years ago I used to pity him. I thought myself a millionaire in ideas. He excavated for the smallest notion. Yet his work does not look dug up. In the end he is no longer about it than another man. Of course he possesses a perfect sense of balance. Do you remember his early passion for pretty women and blue satin. *Aux nymphs son âme, au satin bleu son art!* That is, of course, Jerome. That blue satin has been the mainspring of his vitality. He has had to fight it. I have had no sworn enemy; my success has come too easily. Now I am at sea."

"Venus rose out of the sea and Achilles was dowsed in it," said Dekker.

"I am all 'I' to-night you have to listen to more from me," I went on. I had a great anxiety to recount a number of foolish things, through fatigue and the effect of wine.

"The other night (you have even to listen to a dream!) I dreamed that an immense crucifix stood in the Champs Élysées. A very original dream, I congratulated myself. Somebody stole the cross for firewood, and the figure leaned forward on its iron supports like a gaunt white bird. I, in a moment of national and religious enthusiasm—it was sacred to the nation you must know—offered myself as a substitute for the cross. Since that night I have felt transmitted to wood, inanimate, hard, yet damned to retain consciousness and imagination."

I stopped, and Dekker looked at me solemnly.

"I have wanted your friendship for a long time," he said.

"What a timid sensitive thing friendship is," I replied.

His words passed through me like an electric current and brought tears to the back of my eyes.

"The most exquisite, the most delicate thing in the world," he assented.

Silence visited us again, but this time I was not afraid of her; she brought a number of thoughts in her basket and tumbled them into my heart. But Dekker is not Barbier, he is not at home with silence; she is apt to make him shy and a little bashful, so that I, fortified by his kindness and his good cheer, and his goodwill, took it upon me to send her upon her business.

"Be perfectly frank with me, Friedrich," I conjured him, to show fair feeling using his Christian name which I had to hunt for in my memory. "Do you object to play to me?"

"Would you really care to hear me?" he asked, getting up and evidently pleased.

"Why should I not? You have not gone off, nor will you weary me with Gounod's 'Berceuse' or the like."

"I have written a quartet."

"Well, does that impede your fingers?"

"'Tis that or nothing to-night, an impression of it—the Chantilly Quartet. The first movement is blithe and careless, the second is provincial, 'La femme aux choux-fleurs,' the third has an intellectual theme, the fourth is an erection of the whole into a dilapidated villa. Thank my dog's eyes and the streets of Chantilly for the inspiration."

I laughed.

"Excellent! Begin."

"It is a very serious business."

"I am sure of that. Do not mistake me, I laugh at you only."



"Thanks."

Dekker went over to the piano and picked up his fiddle, and my heart accelerated for no reason. He whistled a bar or two of something.

"I shall whistle a lot on behalf of the second violin in the next quarter of an hour, and the dogs will no doubt assist the 'cello," he said.

"Avanti!" I cried, and Dekker burst forth into sound. I lay back on the sofa and prepared myself to listen, but I could not absorb the music. It fled about the room to my bewilderment. I watched the fire in the stove, I watched the dogs, admired the beautiful thick substance of the moonlight across the floor, and felt glowing in me a friendly personal familiarity with the chairs, the table, the walls of the room; but directly I made an effort to catch Dekker's music I lost my sense of place and fell head over heels into a ridiculous confusion. There was nothing of confusion in the Chantilly Quartet; the notes fell like a shower of rain; yet there was nothing of rain. I lit a cigarette and tried to listen.

Any artist as he shows off his own work, knows instinctively the exact feelings of his companion. Dekker, therefore, stopped playing.

"It won't go to-night," he said, and came and sat down on the arm of his chair, with his violin in his hand.

"You have a right to be annoyed," I said. "I asked for cake and cannot eat it."

"I am not annoyed, you are tired; it was a misjudgment on my part to tax your imagination," replied Dekker gravely.

"I am in that condition," I went on, "when I can only appreciate newspaper morality and objects of art. But for God's sake, remember I have not heard the Chantilly Quartet. When I have gone do not

curse it and say, 'Into the fire with you, you could not hold that fool's attention!' If you entertain any doubt that the error to-night was on my part, I shall never forgive myself."

"How well you know my temperament," said Dekker solemnly, and turned his violin upside down in his hands, and stared at the tortoiseshell markings on its belly.

"A breath of wind can kill an artist," I sentimentalized.

"Yes, quite true, accidental shadows cast by life also," he murmured. "What frail things we are."

"Sparrows which fly off at the flutter of their own wings."

Our thoughts occupied us a while, and I heard time steal softly to and fro about us.

"I will go now," I said to myself; "I will certainly go now, before the evening ravel again"; but I could think of no liberating phrase and nothing pleasant to round off the evening with, which seemed at present like a pointless story.

"Next time we meet we shall have something to laugh at," I said at length.

"How?"

It seemed tiresome to explain myself. Besides, I was not sure that there was anything worth an explanation behind what I had said. Fatigue overcame me again and blurred my sense and my senses. I fancied that I could perceive distant and apparently incongruous objects, symbolical objects, that floated across a blackness. I had not a thought in my head, but only a silly confusion of visions.

"I am like one of Tchekov's characters to-night," I said. "I can only rely on your generosity, and ask you not to remember evil against me. The truth is, I am tired of intellectual achievement and of the higher

forms of art. My powers of perception are overstrained ; I am a fatigued egoist."

This somewhat irrelevant speech in no way cleared the shadows of perplexity from Dekker's face. He put his violin under his arm, thrust his hands in his trouser pockets, and stared at the floor.

" You ask me not to remember evil," he said broodingly. " What evil? You make me both anxious and curious. If there is any evil between us, from you to me, it is a contamination from the air."

" Have your way," I laughed, and Dekker looked up startled.

" Come," I said, " I am a body without a spirit to-night ; dismiss me."

" No, no, I cannot allow you to go so soon," he deprecated, and got up, put aside his violin and fussed about somewhere in the background, possibly to find something to detain me with, at any rate he said after a while :

" I cannot find it."

" What ? "

I heard him search feverishly among papers, music books no doubt, there was a whole tree full of leaves of music shed upon the floor.

" Aha ! " cried Dekker triumphantly, and hurled over on to the sofa a thin worn paper volume.

" A treatise on evil," he said, " published before you and I crept out into the world."

I picked the thing up and looked at it : " *Les Malheures d'un Homme Peu Saint.*"

" For the good of my soul ? " I asked.

" As you choose," he laughed. " Put it in your pocket."

I stuffed it into my pocket to please him. These simple people often find pleasure in the most ridiculous

nonsense. At the same time I got up and began to put on my coat.

"Impossible to keep you?" asked Dekker.

"You have given me an incentive to departure," I replied. Suddenly I did not wish to remain another minute in Dekker's house. For no reason a frantic desire came over me to get away, to be alone again, somewhere where I should not have to speak any more.

"That's a pity."

"It is," I returned. "It is beautiful and quiet here." I must make an effort to escape gracefully. Why escape? I have no idea. "I have often dreamed of spending my whole time at a house in the country—woods, soft rain, and silence. As far as I am concerned it must remain a dream, like the ideal woman of one's youth."

"Without dreams," said Dekker, leaning against his bed-post and watching me button my collar up, "life would be thin soup." He bit his bottom lip, and looked over his left shoulder at the window.

"It's a lovely night." He turned violently and went to the window while I found my hat.

"Alphonse Marichaud," he cried, "does the beauty of the night sometimes drive you almost mad?"

"Often," I answered from the middle of the room; "the thoughts behind the inscrutable stars."

"Yes! My blood tingles in the starshine!"

Now I felt that he also wished to be alone. He began to hum "Aie da li do, da li do!"

"You will not make this your only visit?"

"By no means."

Now we were in the hall, and the oil lamp and the peeling walls seemed no longer romantic; the sense of many empty rooms gave a feeling of desolation.

"Don't let dilapidation infect you," I said.

"Dilapidation is insidious. Solitude is all very well,

but, for God's sake, don't become an exile from Paris."

Dekker wrenched open the front door and his dogs yelped out into the night.

"There is always a danger," he replied, and stood still on the top step sniffing the autumnal spices in the night air.

"Come and see me," I said.

"You are afraid I shall become a Parnassian?"

"Not profoundly."

"How white the moonlight is—one could almost swear there is a hoar frost!" Dekker went down the steps and scratched the gravel with his foot.

"Your frost is an illusion," I said, and offered him my hand.

"Absolutely."

We shook hands.

"Well, to the future," I said. "Good night."

"Good night."

"Thanks for your hospitality."

"Don't mention it."

Dekker stood in the lighted doorway until I was beyond the pollard limes. The distance between us widened to a thousand miles.

I was in my car again driving along the straight St. Denis road. I accepted the swaying of the car as I accepted the swaying of my cradle when I was a baby, and sank into the stupor of my first dark year on earth; but after a while, being thirty years of age and not one, thoughts began to percolate into my empty mind. "Les Malheures d'un Homme Peu Saint," a crowded "Last Judgment," a confused recollection of Michelangelo's pagan vision, lime shadows, Dekker scratching the gravel with his heel, tumbled into the car. Divinity the devil! The pantheists endow all nature with certain grains of



divinity. The devil sits in the opposite scale at the Last Day and weighs up the pinch of glory. I am damned, evil runs in my blood and crawls maggot-like in my flesh: my brain and heart are already afire with the consuming flame. What a rigmarole! I see myself vainly struggling away from the jaws of a hellish monster towards a beatific vision, a vision of high achievement in which I shall lose my wretched personality and become part of eternal good. The vicious monster draws at my heels, and I hang half-way between heaven and hell, clinging with all my desire to the good sight of God, and yet invincibly held down by the indrawing breath of the bad beast.

The car at length stopped at my house. I got out in a dream, and like a man with a heavy burden on his shoulders wearily climbed the stairs. It may have been midnight, but I was beyond the edge of sleep in the power of a remorseless insomnia. During the past fortnight I had slept too little: I had worked late and started awake to work again at barbarous hours. I went into my studio and stood stock still in front of my *Man Beneath a May Tree*, the hero of my despondency, created in blindness out of impotence. I thought over my words to Dekker about him. My evening with Dekker seemed far away, an episode of my life upon earth. I took it in my hand and crushed it out of my memory. A strange feeling possessed me that I was dead, and had recently visited hell; that I was now in a place where the truth was apparent, a bare unpopulated spot, not unlike a museum lit by artificial light, where the records and relics of earth were kept. Something broke in me. I knelt down on the floor and hid my face in my hands; a voice from the very depth of me cried out in silence.

God, have mercy on Your son!

I rose to my feet again; a simple pure feeling had

come over me, a feeling akin to piety. I did not know myself. It was like a spring morning in my heart. I walked up and down a while, forgetful that in life I call myself an agnostic, and thanked God humbly for His immediate answer to my prayer. In my preoccupation I did not notice that my Sleeping Man had become all that I had striven for in the past dark days, nor did I hear the stir of Depression's lank, grey wings as he departed softly out of my vicinity.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*November 1, 1921*

I have felt dissatisfied lately in a new way, Marguerite, and this dissatisfaction is decent and worthy of a reasonable man. It has none of the inconsequence of adolescent discontent. I have suddenly realized that one day I shall actually cease to exist, and therefore the years of my life are all at once become valuable to me. I see that they are not indefinitely many and feel with joy that the experience of death is to be mine. I am to share it with all men, and this certain knowledge has caused me at last to know that I am human. The vagueness of youth has left me, the illusion of immortality has gone. At last I am descended from the clouds and walk decently upon the ground. I think your absence, and the serious necessity for faithfulness on my part to a woman whose face I remember with longing, though by no effort can I visualize it, the necessity for constancy to a vague and beloved dream, has made a man of me. I have been careless and frivolous, wanton, vain, and blind, a glorious demigod in my own opinion, a futile fool in the eyes of truth. The value that you have set upon my love for you has humbled

me and brought a sane dissatisfaction to me. More than that, it has given substance to the shadow that I call myself. Not only am I of actual necessity to somebody, but also I have been able to sustain with fair success my belief in that necessity. Your love is the one means by which I am attached to the earth, Marguerite. Do not imagine that it is a base thing. It is my most valuable possession. Through you, and you alone, I am able to feel the reality of human existence. Be proud, therefore, of your great gift to me. In the cloudiness through which all men wander there are few possibilities of perceiving the truth.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*November 1, 1921*

Girard, I feel that I am changing. This year, in which I have indulged myself with literature has been a time of uncertainty, of hesitation and of doubt. I was not aware until to-day that these stories are an expression of restlessness, and like the poetry of adolescence, no manifestation of genius, but only an accident of development.

When I came back from the long days of summer I expected to return to the man I used to call myself. I looked forward with joy to our reunion, but when I arrived home he was absent, and not until last night did he revisit me. To-day I am with myself again; my whole soul is housed in this one body, but I am changed. Part of me, the most vital and enduring part of me, is different. I feel closer to life and begin to perceive the beauty of the world in truth and not through the golden haze of illusion. I miss the glorious illumination. It is dark and I am naked.

I am to grope my journey forward now inch by inch in an humble attitude, and to take no step without serious intention. At last the journey is begun. I have sung my Odyssey and now must make it. I am glad! Ha, ha! Girrard, I am glad! I am admitted into the company of humanity. Congratulate me. I am advanced to the rank of human being. I am to know what temptation is and all the rest of it. I am to understand the natural meaning of good and bad. In the end I am to consummate the reality of life with death.

I have become aware through long experience of immortality Girrard, that without death life would be a vague pale dream of no actual significance.

*November 21, 1921*

#### FORM

There are fools in every trade, but in the trade of Art there are lunatics.

Last night I fell in with a strange young fellow from Savoy in whom the divine spark burnt to his own destruction; a peculiar chap that had just so much of genius, just so much of common sense, but whose innermost mind I perceived was absolutely mad.

I made his acquaintance by chance at the Café Weber. By chance I say, that is hardly fair to Fate. I saw him sitting alone at a table, went straight up to him and took the opposite seat. In two minutes I discovered he was an artist. For some reason excitement possessed me as if I were approaching colossal significances. I no longer wished for dinner, but in order not to appear grotesque ordered something to eat and a bottle of wine. I offered to pour him out a glass.

"I don't drink," he said, "when I am working."

My God ! I thought, and found in this quite simple statement something terrific, as if I had learnt a fact concerning God's private behaviour during the creation. There was nothing singular about the young man's appearance. He was fair, thin, quiet, well dressed ; there was nothing to mark him except his eyes, which stared into the far-away beyond the brilliant restaurant.

We began to talk. He did not know me, had never heard of me, had never heard of anybody, was trying to recover from the terrible discovery that he was alive and upon the threshold of art.

I saw there was to be nothing mutual about our conversation. He was alone in a world of antagonists, he fought a huge and lonely battle, and had the rest of the well-known sorrows of a certain kind of egoist. I understood that talk was his vice, though he told me that communion with me or any other man tore his soul.

"It is terribly difficult to talk, to tell the truth. I have stayed out on the mountains," he told me, "in order to look at the stars, and I have seen this—from the slopes of Pelvoux I see this. There is a depth of heaven, there is space behind the stars ; I am conscious of distances in the immense chasm of night. You see—distances ; you understand what I mean ? Down in the plains the stars are prick-holes in the blue tent, but there they have form and relationship, and I feel it is the same with art. I look at a landscape and it is flat, but if I climb within myself and struggle to perceive the truth it all appears different, to have form, something terrible to grasp, and life is the same."

"Certainly," I said, "imaginative sight either of eyes or heart is a rare thing and difficult to acquire. At best too, it only amounts to a point of view."



"No, no!" he cried, gazing even further away than when I first sat down at his table. "It is not that; excuse me, but you misunderstand me and I find words hard. Let me try to explain myself. I am not content with a point of view. I want something more—something more—something I am always trying to disentangle out of the confusion I see everywhere."

By this time he sat bolt upright, his arms hanging loosely by his sides, his voice dry with the intensity of his effort to express what he had in mind.

"I want to disentangle the truth, not to see a point of view. You understand. On the slopes of Pelvoux I first realized this: that there is something to be found as if it were an answer to a question, in everything something that only with terrible effort can I find, only with terrible concentration. I have a friend," he confessed, "a woman, and she sometimes comes and sits with me. I draw her face often, and I see what I seek in it for perhaps a moment, then I attempt to put it down. One line expresses it and the rest mean nothing. Sometimes I want to kiss her but I dare not. I fear if I kiss her I shall lose even the little I have gained. She could destroy me. I sit and stare at her a long time when she comes, and then after much terrible suffering I begin to see form in her—not what I see at first, but that which underlies everything. I have done one portrait of her that partly satisfies me; but there is something wrong with the lips, something untrue. I was hasty or tired and ceased to try."

I perceived that the portrait of his friend was the only object at this moment before his eyes, and a troubled look came into them, a terrible troubled look, as if he were fighting with an angel.

"What I mean by form," he continued, "is some-

thing which I can only see after long long hours of thought, and concentration which kills me. After it is over I become weak, my head aches, and I break into tears. Then she will sometimes soothe me and sometimes go away angry, but when I am like that I care nothing for her ; her anger means nothing to me. When my strength returns I am unhappy, and write her a foolish letter begging her to come again as I can arrive at nothing without her. I explain that she gives me courage, which is the greatest thing a woman can give an artist, that she must be patient with me, and because I need her help. I am a timid child which only she can protect. I hesitate a long time whether to post the letter, and when I have put it in the box I go home feeling as if I had betrayed myself, as if too much had gone out of me, and realize I ought to bear exhaustion and suffering in silence, and that through it alone I shall discover what I want to find."

"You have the ascetic philosophy," I said, more in order to say something than because I thought he had. It seemed unlikely that he had any philosophy.

"Why should I have a philosophy?" he asked. "In all this tangle of life there is nothing to make me better or worse. I do not understand what that means. I do not wish to be immortal or to be a good man, or to rise from the dead. I only wish to see. I came away from Savoy because the mountains overwhelmed me. I sought the plains, but there is too much civilization and stupid self-satisfaction there—nasty little houses, and rows of trees planted by somebody ; besides everything is flat. Then I came to Paris to look at the pictures in the Louvre, but they seem vulgar and have no meaning. They are flat visions put on canvas, and leave only two dimensions, like mountains seen from the distance. Besides,

there are too many people here who call themselves artists, and hurt and degrade me whenever they speak. I am poor, but I sometimes come to this café to forget them. The truth is, I must go into the wilds."

"You are too exacting," I laughed.

"You understand that is just what other men say. I am too exacting; but is it possible?"

"Theoretically, no," I answered, thinking of Meunier who desires to write one perfect line and die, but cannot by any means find the perfect line. "Theoretically it is a noble ideal to kill oneself in pursuit of the truth, but practically, certain concessions must be made."

"I make no concessions."

"You are a vain man, then."

"No, I am an humble man. I am the servant of my ideal."

"But you despise the rest of us who have not your fanatical regard for it."

"No, I am frightened of you. My ideal can be so easily injured; you have such power to tempt me and to destroy me and to spoil the little I have got."

It came to me now that his ideal was probably no more than a desire to overcome the difficulty of perceiving and recording the three dimensions; I hardly supposed he knew or cared about Form in the highest artistic sense.

"Have you seen Brzeska's work?" I asked.

"Those distortions!" he said. "I went to look at them."

"Brzeska transmutes the objects with his imagination to a significant form. He carries to a further stage what every artist in some measure does. Each of us combines with nature to produce a third condition if you like—a mingling of consciousness and unconsciousness in a form, if you like, which is come

from the parent form and an intellectual emotion. Consciousness, after which I believe you strive, strength of intellectual emotion and power of expression, are the trinity which create works of art. I speak suggestively, not exactly. As for Brzeska's work, we accept or reject him by an arbitrary feeling, different in each of us, which causes us to draw the norm at different intervals. For myself, I accept him. He lies within its influence on the further side for me, but not beyond. Beyond this side of its influence lies insignificance; beyond the yonder side, art at our present stage of development becomes meaningless and akin to madness."

"I do not understand you," he answered. "I know nothing of what you mean. For me these people are eccentric and their work false. They cannot perceive the truth, and so they make something queer and cheat themselves into believing it wonderful. No, I do not understand you."

I was convinced he had not listened to me. He was battling with the shape of a remembered mountain or of his mistress's arm, or of a tree, I suspected, trying to see it stereoscopically in nature with one eye, and upon canvas in dimension with the other. For that, I did not condemn him. If my convictions were just, indeed he was attempting a brave feat. The effort he was enduring made him dreamy, and he now began to talk more like a somnambulist than even before.

"When I begin to paint," he said, "I see my subject before me, I sit striving to disentangle the truth from it, to arrive at the essence of it, the exact form, that which makes it stick up into the sky and constitutes its bulk."

I understood he had a hill in mind.

"I look at it from a distance, and feel over its curves with my mind, and down the edges of its rocks,



and try to grasp its shape. I don't want to know its anatomy; that has nothing to do with what I want. I want to put it down on the paper, so—just so—you understand?"

He made two gestures with his hands as if he were putting the hill on the table.

"You would find more satisfaction in sculpture," I said.

"That is begging the question," he replied. "I could make a clay hill. It is not that I seek. I should have no sky, no level, the table and the ceiling would be poor substitutes. The relationship I want to find would not be there. I could not realize the distances of one thing behind another with space in between. The purest truths can only be expressed in painting. It is the supreme art, the most difficult in the world. Only by it can form and the relation of form, which I hold supreme and sacred, be expressed."

"Form like that of Aphrodite arises out of the sea," I said.

"We are not talking about the same thing," he answered.

That was quite clear to me.

"I should see your work," I said; "that would clear the matter up."

"It is timid, weak," he murmured. "I am afraid to show it to you, because if you are not in sympathy with it you will injure me. I shall be in torment. I suffer from every misunderstanding of it. It is as with a woman one loves, who is strange and invites adverse feelings; a woman one knows is a stranger in the world and sensitive to the slightest cruelty. The world is cruel and destroys all delicate timid things. One suffers for her even more than she for herself."

I saw that he wanted me to see his pictures, but



that doubt and fear made him terrified of showing them to me. Out of fairness to a human soul I determined to see them. He was nothing to me as people say; personally I cared neither whether he failed or succeeded, but impersonally it seemed important that I should turn after him for a moment and endeavour to understand his mind. I made, therefore, a meaningless but useful remark.

"I am far too sincere an artist," I said, "to sneer at sincerity."

He answered nothing, but quivered slightly, with a kind of terror such as a man who thinks he has defied God rightly might show at the Judgment Day; not with fear that he is mistaken, but that God should be partial to His Own view, and condemn him to Hell through prejudice. I knew the fear of being misjudged, a weak fear like all fears, but one which besets even heroes, more especially before those in whom they hope to find a great magnanimity.

This poor wretch trembled even before an unrespected stranger. I was very sorry for him. I felt such pity for him that I would have withdrawn my desire to see his work if I had not felt that this would be insulting.

As it was, I intimated that he had only to refuse and I should understand his reluctance perfectly.

"No," he said. "I will show them to you," and got up.

I paid the bill, went out into the November night and called a taxi.

"I leave you to direct the man," I said, getting in.

He did so, and climbed in beside me like a frightened hare taking shelter in a dog's kennel.

"My friend came to see me this afternoon," he said, directly we had started on our dark journey. "I shall not be able to work for three days. I do

not understand women. They have a terrible power."

"Have you ever embraced one?" I asked.

"Yes, yes, of course, but I am always terrified. I do not understand what is becoming of me. I lose myself, and it takes me a long time to recover. A woman can make me do anything she wishes if I once look at her, so I try not to look. I only look at my friend as an artist if I can help it. Women destroy me."

I thought, perhaps his only salvation lay in being destroyed by a woman, but did not say so.

We drove across the river and he made me look at the lights and realize how one shone behind the other, and how it was not a question of size that produced the sense of nearness and farness, but of something much more difficult to feel. We went along the river to the left and he returned to the subject of women.

"A great noise like an orchestra confuses me," he said. "I lose my sense of place with a woman. How dangerous it is to kiss a woman! It would take me all my life to become accustomed to them. No, no! I prefer to be afraid of them, and this is why. Sometimes I feel I can dominate them, at certain moments I get a supreme and flaunting feeling and care nothing for my art. Everything I strive for is forgotten; I only feel I am glorious, I am glorious, I am glorious! I know there is no foundation for it, and that it's only animal ecstasy. I look at myself in the glass next day and realize women are my enemies. I am bitterly ashamed of myself and spend two or three days in despair. Everything I had is lost, and I have to begin and build myself again. Sometimes it takes three weeks."

Poor fellow, poor fellow! I thought, he is pulling against the whole tide of life, I suspect out to a rock on which he will wreck himself.

We arrived in a dark badly lighted street that I did not know. The wind blew chill here and it was beginning to rain.

I told the driver to wait and he shrugged his shoulders, and muttered something about the devil, and that he'd wait unless he had to save his skin.

"I have only one little room," said the strange young man. "The light is bad and the circumstances will not be fair to my work."

"I am not insensible to circumstance," I said impatiently.

"A conductor on the night express to Marseilles lives below me. He bores me with his descriptions of how he lives. He has two wives: one he keeps here on his tips and one in Marseilles on his pay; he has forgotten which is the real one. He comes up to ask for cigarettes, and never will go away until he has smoked one and taken another. Below him is a washerwoman who sometimes cooks me little things and washes my shirts for nothing. She interrupts me with her charity, and shames me into kissing her sometimes. My life is not my own here; I cannot work, expecting either her or the guard, or the post, or my friend."

It was a long way up to his room, and the stairs were steep and dirty. At last we got to the top. I felt like a young doctor beginning practice among the poor, and half expected to attend an accouchement. There was a light under his door. He appeared not to be surprised, but said, "Excuse me," slipped round the door, which he only half opened, and left me in the dark. I felt for my revolver, and began to plan how to defend myself in case of an attack. The probability that he was a decoy entered my mind. But, no, nothing exciting happened. The door half opened again and somebody bustled down the stairs

past me, then my Savoyard reappeared and I was invited within. An iron bed, a few chairs, a mouldy wall illuminated by a cracked lamp, canvases and a jumble of oil tubes, cups, bread and a teapot on a bare table, constituted his home.

"This is a bad lodging," he apologized, "but the best I could get away from the north side and the Latin Quarter. I am not so poor as this." He smiled, and I quite liked him. A nice simple look came into his eye which he soon banished, however.

"That Matilde was here putting a button on my shirt. I think she was reading my letters, but there is nothing in them. Sometimes I think she is in love with me and reads them from jealousy."

Again he was quite human, but for the last time. He began almost immediately to tauten his mind into the condition that he strived after, and bent over his canvases and papers sorting out one and another. I sat down as far away from him as possible on a chair at the bottom of the bed and watched him look for drawing-pins, arrange a little easel, and put the lamp in a position to cast its uncracked half of radiance on the wall space between the two hooks on which his clothes hung and the corner near the window.

He pinned something on the wall.

"That's my friend," he said.

I was agreeably surprised. The quality of the drawing was good, and the thing had thickness. It was not superior to a hundred studio studies, however. He produced an oil version of it. This again had dimensions, but it was hard and repulsive, a mere gymnastic exercise in nasty colours. He put a landscape on the easel. The colours were execrable, the picture ill-proportioned and no better in execution than the first effort of an intellectual amateur familiar with modern painting. A hill stood up in the middle



certainly, and he rhapsodized over it, but though it had cubic capacity it had no form. I saw several pictures. The further he retreated from the drawing-school and an obvious hard training in life studies, the more meaningless and childish he became.

"You don't like them," he said, looking at me like an anxious faithful dog. He forgot in the moment of emotion to be antagonistic.

"A man who devotes himself to an ideal will never be allowed to earn his living. You are lucky to have a competency," I said.

"I can only just live."

"That is sufficient," I answered.

He got up. He was too sensitive not to be aware that I was unmoved by his work. I could say nothing. Instinctively I knew I was a danger to him, that I had suddenly become important in his life. I have not that cold courage which thinks unfortunates are better dead. This creature, in spite of the madness that bewitched his soul, was not one to whom I could recommend suicide, whom I dared to crush by telling him to try for a clerk's situation or to use his influence with the Marseilles guard.

Only once have I told a man to end his life, and then neither out of anger nor pity, but merely by way of well-considered advice asked and given in good part. This young man had not sufficient calibre to sustain the truth. And was I to break his hope in pieces, to send him hysterically towards the river? Marichaud leaves other men's souls alone. Possibly I overrated my importance. Suppose that I told him his ideas were bosh, his work shocking, he might only believe it for an hour, relax, weep, have a sleepless night, and live his miserable effort at self-construction over again. I was wretched. There was nothing to be done. I had neither the right nor the courage to



do anything. Unfortunately I had landed myself in such a position that I could not move or speak without a result. If I went abruptly away, or told or acted a lie, or spoke the truth, it would have some result which I could not foresee.

You fool, I thought to myself, you are a mere bull in a china shop, if you so much as move you'll break something. Have the sense to make for the door. In the end it will do least harm.

But compassion overcame me. I stayed an hour. I knelt on the dirty floor and looked at his daubs over and over again. I saw the germ of genius in his heart, and the mechanical obsession which replaced his deficient imagination. He had a grain of genius, but he could only draw what he had learnt to draw at school, and lived under a delusion, a sad and horrible delusion that was driving him mad. He imagined the truth lay in the height and width and breadth of a common hill, whereas it lies in the dimensions of Parnassus. I humbled myself, praised this, condemned that gently ; where I saw a possible coincidence with the sublime, hinted at what I saw. But he did not understand me. He reiterated his theories, common old school-theories of perspective and middle distance and the rest of it, gilded with the stars of heaven, unremarkable discoveries of his own about the modelling of the human head, discoveries that had no vitality and no beauty, that were neither fundamental nor essential, and that amounted in all to no more than a few tricks.

When I went away he thanked me and held out his hands. He embraced and thanked me seriously again and said that he had no one to trust. He did not accompany me down into the street, and I saw that he was longing for solitude to dream over my praises.

Phew ! I was glad to get out of doors, and now

remembered the musty smell in his room. Poor fool ! he wanted to go into the wilderness and let his imprisoned spirit expand. Poor idiot ! it was not his mildewed lodging which cramped him, nor the walls of Paris, nor the pack of antagonistic wolves about his shins : he was a prisoner in his own chains, a freedom-loving spirit self-bound in trivial bonds. Glad was I at least that he lived in an attic, from thence his heart could wander away to the desert ; but if he escaped out there in body, he would have no refuge from himself, no respite from his hard-won jail, no haven of imaginary peace.

Yes, I was sorry for him, I pitied him and saw the nightmare of his future ; but being no saint nor having any pretensions to the rank of saviour, I was glad that I had forgotten to give him my address.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*November 17, 1921*

Yesterday I had a temptation, Girrard. I saw the beautiful Marchesa S—— and was tempted to make a statue of her in the Greek manner, coloured and with the eyes painted in. The vision of her tormented me all night, and I lay awake till dawn making an image in my mind that seemed to me, alone in the morning darkness, the finest thing that I had ever created. I have spent the whole day putting the finishing touches to that dream in an ecstasy of admiration, and am now utterly exhausted. If I had the magic to turn my dream into wood or plaster with a wave of my hand, or even if it cost me the wages of an enchanter and a night of abracadabras, I would put myself to the trouble of perpetuating it ; but since I am not Faust, nor have the Devil's confidence, I shall let it fade

away again into the darkness out of which it came. And why? The thing is too much within my range. I have no time any longer to waste on beauty that I can realize in a single night, beauty that is less than I am capable of perceiving, attained without effort on my part, or the labour that gives substance to the flimsy things of imagination. Such beauty has not the satisfaction of creative desire within it. I have already enjoyed all the graces of my painted image. It has given me already whatever good it is capable of. I am surfeited of it before I have so much as bought the plaster for its immortality.

I do believe, Girrard, that if a man can see and know his whole work in a single night he had better not begin it. No man is large enough to see a whole truth in an hour. Quick visions are born to be quickly forgotten. Beauty that is not ephemeral lies hidden in the heart for many days; it is slow of growth and painful in its growth. For my part I am unable to visualize the good in my best work; I can only feel it. Not until I have become a stranger to it can I see what I have made objectively. I think only fools acclaim the beauty of their own conceptions, and in this world they are justified, for when they are brought forth a multitude of fools will admire them.

*November 27, 1921*

## THE FUTURE

### I

"Alexandr Andreitch Kishkin! Permit me to introduce to you Monsieur Alphonse Marichaud."

A tall gentleman got up from a deal table, on which stood a jug of water and a glass, and bowed to me.

"It gives me extreme pleasure to make your acquaintance, monsieur."

His voice had an indescribable charm that pre-disposed me entirely in his favour.

"Monsieur," I replied, bowing in my turn, "we were strangers, but your welcome has reassured me."

Maurice Duchesne offered me a gilt arm-chair, and we three sat down round the deal table. The light of the lamp shone full upon Kishkin's pale bearded face. I was surprised at the power and poetic intensity of thought which showed, as it were, through his skin. Like the faces in Leonardo da Vinci's pictures, his countenance in repose had a transparent nobility.

"You are come at the right time to see me," he said, with an entrancing smile. "I had read the paper, folded it neatly, and began to wish that Monsieur Duchesne would bring me an excuse to drink tea, and here you are. My host and very dear friend has almost drowned himself in tea to please me. His tea is very good. I am scandalously greedy and idle here, and am treated like an orchid. I have steam heat and plenty of people come to admire me. All that is very nice, is it not?"

"It is excellent," I replied, "though I am no devotee of the elixir of Cathay."

"Ah! Here it is brewed according to the poetical instructions of Kien-lung. You are a sculptor, Monsieur Marichaud. Tea perhaps is a literary vice."

Kishkin folded his knarled pale hands and rested them on the table. The nails were discoloured and deformed with some kind of labour. His attitude expressed what I had least expected to find in him—satisfaction, self-satisfaction even, a repleteness of soul as if he had drunk deep of existence and was now content. A puzzling man. Why did he indulge in the anchoritish affectation of a deal table in the midst of Maurice's luxuriant flat? He had a Tolstoian

craze for simplicity perhaps. Then why did he wear a gold ring and have a huge bronze vase on a pedestal behind him stuffed with bouquets?

"You are in Paris for long?" I asked.

"Russia has dispensed indefinitely with my services."

"Alexandr Andreitch has the misfortune not to be valued by his countrymen," said Maurice.

"Russia is at a very difficult crisis of her history. I accept my lot," said Kishkin.

"Are you not aghast at what has befallen your country?" I asked.

"Yes, I am aghast," replied Kishkin, with great simplicity, "but I am satisfied. Our punishment is the essential consequence of our crime. It is natural and just. I for one have no quarrel either with the crime or with the punishment. I do not know"—he looked me in the eyes—"whether a Western European can enter into understanding with me. I think you will have to become a Russian and have born in you a Russian's holy love for his country before it will be possible for you to feel in sympathy with me."

"Permit me to beg you to look upon me for this evening as one of your own countrymen," I replied. "I readily believe that I shall not understand you, but allow me to hope that you will explain yourself fully to me in your own terms. What you have said stirs my imagination."

"You will accuse me of garrulousness if you encourage me to talk about my country, monsieur. In absence one finds a great deal to say about beloved persons."

I addressed myself to Maurice.

"If you will guarantee that I shall not be condemned as importunate, Maurice, suggest to Alexandr Andre-



itch that nothing will give me more content than his garrulousness!" I begged.

Maurice flicked the ash from his cigarette.

"You will not reproach me if he tears your bowels out?"

"I shall be grateful for a valuable experience."

Kishkin leaned back in his chair out of the glare of the lamp.

"It will give me a sorrowful pleasure to cause you even a valuable distress," he said.

The fine, delicate, yet not effeminate modelling of Kishkin's features was accentuated by the half-light in which he sat. The shaded lamp produced an effect of chiaroscuro. He had not strict beauty, but his face had been wrought by intellect and experience into an extraordinarily interesting piece of natural sculpture.

Tea was brought in and served, and when we had each a cup the footman put the urn, which was a small one, on the table in front of Kishkin with jam and lemon.

"If ever I return to Russia I will send you a samovar, Maurice," said Kishkin. "There have been times when the samovar was the only thing in the way of a stove that I could come by. They are friendly animals, and when the crickets sing they join in and make a pleasant concert. I shall send you a family of crickets also. Crickets, bugs, and the samovar flourish in spite of all our sorrows."

"The satisfactory sorrow?" I asked.

"Yes, my Russian friend," said Kishkin, smiling. "Our satisfactory sorrow. Ecstasies of destruction have not killed my faith in our suffering. I have, as Dostoiefsky said, 'felt clearly and as it were tangibly' in the darkest hour that a hope which is truly national and which has been consecrated in Russian thought,

which civilization has obscured and obfuscated, is becoming a living fact through the crime and punishment of my country. We are all the Brothers Karamazow, children of the loins of the Unseeing Beast. The Revolution has a twofold significance: it is the revolt of the Future against the Past, of dawning consciousness against the Blind Beast. It is also the revolt of the Russian spirit against a falsity that had insinuated itself into the Russian soul—a falsity that strangled not only the unconscious Past, but which threatened to strangle also his children, who were already ashamed of the brutal darkness of their father."

Kishkin spoke quietly and with amazing nobleness of demeanour. I felt that I might believe anything that he chose to say. The grace of his manner, the humaneness of his personality utterly won me.

"It is not this man or that who has caused the revolution," he continued. "The Revolution is the natural expression of Russian thought; it is the act of the whole Russian peoples. It is an attempt to cut off the Hideous Thing from amongst us. We could not abide the past because we were become conscious of it. Our new consciousness, our self-consciousness, made it impossible to bear for a day longer with an abomination that was become alien to us, and was too close, a Beast which craved and did not know his craving, who for all he could tell was a black hole enclosed in a body, who 'desired' and never had enough, who could only be bored not satisfied. He must fill the black hole, he must stuff it with good things; but it was never full. How should it be ever full? It was the bottomless pit."

"But there is much beauty, much good in the old sensualist," I expostulated. "I cannot hate him bitterly. I dine with him frequently, Alexandr

Andreitch. I find him quite a good fellow. I even admire him."

"You are a rich man," smiled Kishkin. "The truth, I think, cannot be perceived by those who are burdened with wealth. A curtain of luxury, of culture, hangs between you and life. Here the tide of circumstance sets to a rich man; and because he is the expression of civilization, the aim and the end of it, he cannot see nor does he need to see what is the end, the aim of human life, nor can he be aware to what shore the greater tide of time is bearing him. Fortunately for yourself you are an artist, and I think an honest man; so that on your other side you bear the stamp of renaissance and express, without intention perhaps, what you do not care consciously to admit."

"How so?"

"I have seen some of your work, it is self-conscious in the highest sense. It is aware of its good. For the man who realizes only the evil which is in the human race there awaits a nail on the back of his own door. He may, if he cares, shut the door and hang himself on the nail; his death even will have no meaning. He is nothing. In my youth I attempted to be an artist; I imitated the most national of our writers and thought that I was ennobling the Russian language and the national thought. Before I suffered I did not know that it is necessary to feel the truth, not only with one's mind, but with one's whole being. Afterwards I saw how much I had been to blame in thinking that my half-felt thoughts—thoughts real only to my mind—were of any value. I had not that strange occasional genius which is independent of experience. I had made myself and my country ridiculous in a small amount that, with the efforts of others like me, made a shameful heap."

"Alexandr Andreitch, I am suffused with shame."

Kishkin looked at me with compassion, almost with tenderness, and now very directly addressed himself to me.

"Are you not aware," he asked, "that in the mystery of the flesh, in the dark animal history of the human race, there came a time when man perceived 'I am.' Again and again he has perceived 'I am,' and added divers qualifications. 'I am in the image of God,' 'I am not as the brutes are,' 'I am even as the beasts of the field, as the fowls of the air, even as the grass of the field, which to-day is green and to-morrow is cast into the oven.' There came a time of new revelation. The Word was God and the Word was made flesh. God took upon Himself the human image; the flesh and the spirit were unified for the redemption of the flesh. And what is this redemption of the flesh-which-is-God's-Word? How shall this flesh, the 'Word of God,' become the symbol of truth, the perfect Oneness? We, the children of the brute, are of the flesh of the brute, but the Word was made flesh and we are of the Word, and this since the beginning and for all time. In the recognition of this unity, in the consciousness of it within ourselves, lies the hope and salvation of the human race."

Something stirred in the dark places of my heart, a new and strange expectation filled me, and at the same time I felt distressed and not little perplexed. I perhaps was the exile—I, who had come to show a man who had lost his country a friendliness and to give him a welcome in a strange city, was perhaps in more need of consolation than he.

"We have understood neither redemption nor salvation, nor have we known the flesh nor the spirit." Kishkin spoke again generally to Maurice, whom I had forgotten, and to an absent gathering. "The beauty of the body, and the desire of the body is the will



of God ; the beauty of the spirit and the desire of the spirit is the will of God. The will of God is one and cannot be divided, and this Oneness of the spirit and the body is the aim and final state of the human progress. Christ shall come again not as one man, but as all men. For almost two thousand years Christian people have stared up at the sky and said ' Heaven is upon the other side of that blue ceiling. If we are lucky we shall go there when this mortal business is done with.' Science opened the sky for us. The believer put his heaven an infinitesimal distance nearer, in his dreams. One man alone turned his back on the stars—a man who by all repute knew what the heavens held, and said, ' The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' ”

Kishkin looked at me and smiled humorously.

“ I think our eyes have become glazed with staring at a blank horizon.” He looked calm, he looked happy, but I was in a terrible distress.

“ And may we only be redeemed through hideous suffering ? ” I asked.

“ Tragedy is of the flesh,” replied Kishkin ; “ the suffering of my country, which I think you tremble to contemplate, is the punishment of our crime against the flesh. We suffer because we raised our hand against the dense blindness of that out of which we came. The past stood in the midst of us—a blind devouring animal—and although it was our Father, we rose up and annihilated it, and for this just crime we are justly punished.”

“ But this just crime,” I cried ; “ I am unable to comprehend the logic of it ! Will men be any better for this—patricide—this——”

I was so agitated that I rose to my feet and walked over to the fire-place and warmed my hands at the blaze.



"In Russia at one time God's plain beast served the omnipotence of the Creator in absolute and perfect belief in His all-terrible power. God was the great patriarch, the Father even of the Tzar. At the same time He was simply a more powerful Barin, the Lord of a nation-family. The old Russian saw no reason not to be a plain beast, and even upon his death-bed he repented his broken fast days with fear, and forgot to remember his cruelties, fornications, and murders. To understand my country you must know that it was not natural for us to clothe the nakedness of our Animal. But, latterly, civilization has to our cost decked out our shamelessness in ill-fitting toggery. God no longer recognized His beast, and the beast forgot his God in contemplation of his new exterior.

"When the old faith became enfeebled a blind race grew up in Russia ; an education which ill suited our needs created a fog in which many of those who might in another case have been worthy people were lost. Our aristocracy was hideous, the middle class attempted to imitate a civilization which was poison to it, only to a handful of educated people and to the innocent but ignorant peasants remained any sound vitality. Twenty years ago I went one night to a discussion club. Dostoiefsky was but recently dead ; Tolstoi died for me when he finished *Peace and War*, when he ceased to be genuine. It was there determined among twenty or thirty of us that Western Europe was an enemy only second in menace towards our country to the disease which threatened to destroy the Russian soul—a disease of blindness to which we became an easy prey, which we were ill fitted by reason of our late development as a thinking nation to combat. The dark plague was aggravated by the corruptness of a culture which we allowed to invade us, and it seemed that only by a reawakening of the

Russian heart with a conspicuous truth—a truth natural to the Russian spirit, that had grown out of the Russian truth loving genius—could the plague be cured and the degrading alien influence repudiated. It appeared to us, therefore, that if it were possible to open the eyes of our brothers to the nobleness and dignity of their bodies, and to the nobleness and dignity of their soul, and to cause them to feel in all their members, in their hearts and minds, and with all their senses that the soul and body cannot live at enmity but only in unity, it would be possible not only to put away a civilization which is foreign to our nation, but to cure the blindness which caused rot and shame throughout Russia.

“At that time it did seem possible to do this, for you must remember forty thousand people had followed Dostoiefsky to his grave, who had finally become the prophet of this idea. Fourteen years afterwards we welcomed the Revolution. We welcomed it because we unhappily felt that only when the diseased part of our nation was cut away could the true idea be allowed to stand forth.”

“And you are now satisfied?” I reiterated. “Your country has made an exile of you, yet you are satisfied that your country holds your belief in its heart, that the self-consciousness which you have in perfection caused the catastrophe which to Western eyes has been fatal to your national genius.”

“My exile is the result of an insignificant accident.”

“And other men of thought, men who possibly hold similar beliefs, the same belief, are also destroyed—exiled—by accident—men who must be valuable.”

“Our value is impersonal,” replied Kishkin.

“Forgive me!” I cried, “I am unable to hear you dispassionately. I am unable to feel your happy confidence in the actions of your countrymen. I am

profoundly moved, I am a little intoxicated, a great deal shocked."

I looked Kishkin full in the face. He was as calm as when I first came into the room. His calmness overwhelmed me. This man had nothing, neither money, nor home, nor country. His friends and those dear to him were lost in separation or death, yet he could love the beauty of flowers, drink tea and read the newspaper, and trouble to have a deal table for some reason put in his room. A noble happiness illuminated his features; his thoughts were spoken with a calm certainty of their truth. But . . .

Maurice flicked the ash from his cigarette.

"You are a nation of quack philosophers, my dear Alexandr," he said.

. . . . .

## II

I was on my way home. I took a cab down to the Place de la Concorde and dismissed it at the Crillon. It seemed impossible to go home. I walked a little way along the arcade of the Rue de Rivoli. At that hour, with the shops shut, it presented the aspect of a series of cellars. The light of the gas-lamps cast a sickly illumination among the gloomy arches. Not many people passed me, and those few went by with a furtive and suspicious air, and I felt that bad intentions towards me lurked in their hearts, and under the vaulting of the arcade and behind the iron shutters of the shops. If I were destroyed, what a pity; in an impersonal sense I stood for so much. A little longer! A little longer! I had no sympathy with revolution. Was my aversion to a wiping away of the existing state of things genuine, or the product

of fear? Many beloved circumstances would wither in the fierce blast of that gale, worthless circumstances no doubt. What of progress? Who knew the truth? Kishkin, Lenin, the Germans, the Fascisti, the Church, the apostles of Modern art, the British Government? Or did the truth lie in my antagonism to the horror of Kishkin's satisfactory debacle and in my instinctive feeling that the human race can take care of itself, that the history of the past assures the history of its future, and that hysterical orgies of killing, wars, and national dementia mean nothing at all in this long evolution of mankind from slime to an ultimate transcendency?

I crossed the street and walked along by the Tuilleries. It was cold. A wind blew from the south-east, the pavements were mottled with mud. The night was black and moonless. I, who love my fellow-men, hated everybody in the street. If these dark ugly objects with dreary and unpleasant faces were the best effort of an elaborate and slow-working Nature, what of that small voice of optimism which spoke just now within me? Goloshes, overcoats, bulging eyes, painted lips, improper eyes, wan blank countenances! These were nice house-decorations for Kishkin's divine Second-Coming. Faugh! I was melodramatic. I churned up the dark sea in my heart with many stupid thoughts as I turned through the Louvre gateway and along the Rue des Tuilleries to the river.

At any rate, if I work honestly I can't injure the future, I thought, that is, if there is a future susceptible of injury. Who knows? I hurried over the bridge like a criminal, turned to the left and set off up the Rue Buonaparte at a great speed. The absurdity of my little figure burdened with the ghost of destiny, as it bolted along the stone rabbit-ways of a city as



big as a flea in the eyes of the indifferent stars, failed to strike me. My rabbit's brain tortured with a problem out of all due proportion to its capacity, whirled round and round in my head. I seemed to myself the arbiter of fate ; on my decision hung the future. Vain arrogance ! Preposterous rabbit ! Man alone among the beasts is capable of this sublime stupidity. For that he holds the trump card in this world—a card which cannot take a single trick. But . . .

I went into the first café that had any attraction, sat down, and ordered an absinth. That at the moment perhaps, was the most sensible thing I could do. After I had swallowed it I felt a need of human company, and as Jerome lived near by went and knocked him up.

He let me in and got into bed again grumbling. He was reading " Marie Chapdalaine." What of that ? I recounted my evening's adventure to him in detail.

" If your Alexandr has said anything of the truth it will have taken root in you. I diagnose conception has deranged your nerves," said Jerome.

" Yes ; I am pregnant again."

Jerome laughed.

" C'est votre vice les plus magnifique, très cher, Monsieur."

. . . . .

### III

I threw aside Boland's " History of Evolution " and went to my study window, not that the melancholy afternoon was any attraction, but then Boland was veritable sawdust.



The November wind rattled down the dreary street, the old man in the top flat opposite had shut his window tightly for the winter, the skeletons of his tomato plants trembled against the five wires stretched for their support. In the flat below, the young couple had hung up winter curtains of striped material, much faded on the side I had the privilege of beholding. Smoke blew down into the street, and the ivy on the courtyard wall of the Pension Notre Dame shivered with cold. Three blackened leaves twirled round on their thin stalks in the thin branches of the lime-tree, under which the Pensionnaires used to sit on summer evenings. It was a miserable afternoon.

I returned to the fire, stoked it up, and sat down again in Boland's company, read a dozen or so pages with difficulty, and when my thoughts were strong enough to support themselves, threw the old fool on the floor. Towards four o'clock somebody invaded my flat. I expected Barbier at five, but this was not Barbier come before his time, it was not his step. I was annoyed, and thought that I was beginning to enjoy myself, which was not the case.

My study door opened and Greshkoff, of all men, came in. I sprang up and welcomed him with amazement. I grasped him by the shoulders and kissed him as if he had brought me something splendid.

"My God!" I cried, "how long is it since we met?"

"Eight years," he replied. "You are a man now; when I went away you were a boy of twenty-two. You are the same, yet not the same."

"Every atom in my body has changed since you last came here. I am the son of the lad you honoured with your friendship. And you; how are you? What adventures have you had? What have you suffered?"

"To be forty in Russia is to be too young to die and too old to live."

"My dear man!" I cried, "come, sit down. What will you drink, eat, smoke?"

But Greshkoff seemed not to hear me. He sat down gloomily near the fire; he sat down with his big fur-lined coat on as if he did not care to part with it. The cuffs were worn through at the edges, and the collar had moulted like a mangy dog.

"You'll stay?" I asked. The trivial things of hospitality seemed of paramount importance: Will he stay? Will he eat? Will he drink?

"I have come to think so basely of men that kindness overwhelms me," he answered.

"Excuse me," I cried, and went out of the room to find Petrushka. I ordered things to eat and drink and came back.

"Splendid to see you again, George Pavlovitch," I said, and threw myself down in my chair to look at him. "I met a countryman of yours last week. Your visit is in the nature of a coincidence." Though it was four or five years since I had forgotten Greshkoff, since I had let him vanish from my mind as something that has ceased to be, all the old memories of him revived suddenly, and I recollected what I used to think of him. He sat muffled up in his old coat by the hot fire, a man tired beyond the possibility of recovery, I thought. He seemed to find difficulty in grasping the presence of any material reality, he seemed tired into a state of mere spiritual existence.

"You had a pleasant life here?" said Greshkoff.

"Calculated in animal comforts—yes."

He stretched out his hands to the fire without energy. It was the ghost of an old action.

"I am dead," he said, "a spirit wandering in the world. I have forgotten the significance of objects.

I see things as a spirit sees them, larger and more vividly than you do, but I have forgotten their purpose. The terrible thing is that I am not a noble ghost, I have no magical discoveries to tell you about the spirit world. I have not seen anything marvellous—nothing, as they say, in the manner of a revelation. I have not penetrated a step into the darkness. One piece of sanity I have preserved from the past ; I know that I need money, that is, I need bread in order to prolong even my spirit existence. I tell you frankly I have not a penny in the world.”

In spite of his frank confession I did not know whether he was asking me for money ; what I did know was that my old friend Greshkoff was vanished, and that this man who sat here perfectly still and stared into the fire bore about the same relationship to him that Petrushka did to me. “ For old times’ sake lend me ten francs, I have been obliging enough to give you some information about a lost friend.” That is the idea he brought into my head, but I did not know whether he either hoped or expected that I would give him anything.

“ Will a thousand francs serve you at all ? ” I asked.

“ Yes,” he replied, and sighed.

Was he gratified, did he expect more ?

“ I am a mean ghost,” he went on. “ I have no interest in anything. If I have nothing to eat, I shrug my shoulders. I should not even have been disappointed if you had given me nothing. I did not come to borrow. What you lend me I shall never give back. I expect you wonder why I wear a fur coat, why it has not been stolen or pawned. I am a lunatic, that is why. I think it is part of my body. It is full of fleas, but I should get cold without it.”

The marrow in my bones ached, not because Greshkoff’s coat was full of fleas, but because I saw that

suffering had made him mean and selfish. Sufferings purify. Here was a man whom I had once thought noble, rich in intelligence, and of consequence as a human being. I had to admit that these fine qualities belonged to his outer self, grew in his flesh and were garnered in his purse ; they did not spring from his heart. Now he was purified certainly, refined in the chemical sense, and there was next to nothing of pure metal from the shining bulk of his former self.

"I have lost everything," he continued.

That was true.

"My house in Petrograd is empty, the shutters are falling off, the roof has a chasm in it, and the lock is riveted with rust. I tried to get down to Yeroslav where I had a villa. I dare say that is in the same condition. I do not care."

"What shall you do in Paris ? " I asked.

"I shall not stay in Paris."

He said this in such a tone that I realized he intended to become part of the underworld and to engage in some vile traffic—intended to become——? He was part of it already.

"How shall you live ? "

"As I may. When you have become as I am, you do not care more for one way than another. My susceptibilities can no longer be offended ; I have none. I am a beast, and I am not ashamed of it either ; I have no shame. There are only two things in this world Marichaud—to live and to die. One lives because one is born and dies when one has sufficient energy to cease living. I shall be wiped off the slate soon by fate. I am diseased. In former times I would not have associated with the man who sits here.

"Why did you come to see me ? " I asked, and as unostentatiously as possible counted him out a



thousand francs. He took the notes, surreptitiously as it were, without further thanks.

"How can I tell you? Perhaps because I saw your name in a newspaper, or feel you are a man to whom nothing is common or unclean. We have that in sympathy, but for different reasons: I, because to escape despair I have killed my aristocratic sense, you, because you are generous."

Barbier came in, early after all, and Greshkoff without any preliminaries rose and went out. I followed him into the hall. I thought he was taken ill.

"It has not been a success," he said. "I really came to hunt up something I have lost. I see I am really done for." And he began to cry.

"You have scarcely been here five minutes," I said. "Come back and stay the evening. Barbier is a simple soul." His suddenness confused me. I felt a little disgusted.

"Impossible," he whimpered, but I understood he would really have liked to stay. I did not want him now, poor soul!

"I am crying," he said. "No, I had better go. It's cold in the street, but I had better go. It is not so bad as I have known."

In spite of the prospect of a long, tedious evening of false sentiments and reminiscences, I pressed him to stay; but, no, he took my hands and crushed them in his; he could not stay; it was noble of me to ask him and he would like to come in and warm himself by the fire, but it was not my fault. In there he felt like a dog with muddy feet; he would get disgustingly drunk too; and if I would excuse him he would rather spend this money without restraint in one night's debauchery. He made no pretence of his intentions.

"Just as you like," I agreed.



"Thank you, I am only a ghost," he murmured, "and I hope to find reality again for one night."

I let him go, and he hurried to get out of the door as if he were frightened.

I went back to Barbier.

"That was Greshkoff," I said. "God help me, I am as perturbed as if the Devil had just shuffled off. He is absolutely done for and as mad as a tuft of grass."

"What did he come for?" asked Barbier.

"I have no idea. However, that is over." But it was not over, for though his body had gone, he still sat in the room, and I could not ignore him.

"What is the purpose of life, Paul?" I asked.

"God knows."

"Come, do not be idle," I cried, "have something to say. Is there a God? Is there a future life? Is there a millennium? Is anything to be hoped of evolution—for that matter of revolution? Greshkoff has shaken me, and in the vibrations of that shaking I am become sensitive of other vibrations. Phew! Paul, I am trembling."

I threw myself back in my chair and felt my nerves quiver. Kishkin and Greshkoff, the Aye and the No!

"Happy is the man that never feels the future," I went on, "and that wakes each morning to the day after the one before; but I wake each morning from the dead. Among the dead one learns to perceive that there is no time; among the living one learns that men are fettered by some strange law whose virtue is patience. Every night and every day I learn and unlearn the same two things. If you had your will, Paul, what would you choose?"

"There," said Barbier, "you ask me something reasonable. I would choose for Helen of Troy to come to my house one sunny morning and to offer herself

as my wife. By now much knowledge will have made her tender and kind ; her beauty, as you know, is as bright to-day as it was five thousand years ago ; she is still as young. She shall come one morning about eight o'clock or at six or seven if she chooses, when the world is fresh and cool and the wicked still lie in bed ; I will welcome her and take her in my arms, and in due time we shall be the parents of a little daughter. There is my ridiculous day-dream." Barbier smiled at his invention.

" Beautiful ! " I exclaimed, though I knew that it was as far from Barbier's real desire as the moon. " I wish the very opposite of you, and I have my wish. I rush from Pole to Pole, embroil myself in shattering adventures at the instigation of an excited fancy. I belong to the world. I have no set place which I call home. My wife lives out in the world far away—that is, she is not shut up with me in a cage, but lives as I do in the open. She is mine though I don't lock her up in a cupboard, and if she denies me, I will throw her to the four corners of creation. My work is carried on in the Market Square in wind and rain, under the sun and stars ; the crowd jostles my elbows at critical moments ; my head buzzes with a thousand half-caught conversations, and I am plagued with other men's thoughts. Now tell me, Paul," I implored, " how do you reconcile our two wishes ? "

" I do not attempt to."

" Have you a God ? Have you a religion ? I seem to feel I have heard you say one cannot live without a religion of some kind, something on the positive side which unifies existence," I urged.

" Yes, I have some kind of a religion."

" What then ? "

" You ask of me a genius I have not got, Alphonse," he answered. " I have a few timorous feelings and a

few scattered recognitions, but as Le Gros, who despises me says, 'How can you expect a man who docketts his bills to worship a divine god?'"

"Is to flower and bring forth the sum of life," I demanded. "Are you and I but noble barbarians, glorious, fertile and unchanging savages, such as we think women, or is it possible we are not the harvest but the reapers?"

"You have too much courage, Alphonse," said Barbier, stretching out his feet to the fire. "I was defeated in open battle long ago by Reason. Since then I pursue a quiet policy."

"Reason! Traitor of this ignorant world!" I cried. "Reason is the mother of distortion. Human Reason is the enemy of God. If the God that we have obscured in Reason had not been made by priestdom to impose reason upon me and a static obedience, I should still be a devoted sweeper of the temple floor. God tried to cheat me into obedience with, 'Such thou art, do this and I will reward thee.' But I do not know what I am, Paul. I try to embrace the universe, and imagine it may produce something to the good of mankind some day."

"You and I are men without obligations," said Barbier; "we are detached from the involved world of business, from politics, from family life; we are of no practical importance to a living soul."

"Do you pine for the sheep-folds of Gilead?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"I never; I am born a vagabond."

"Sometimes my life seems white, insipid," continued Barbier; "well, yes, I know it is far from the heroic—it is too limpid, as Le Gros says. Men come to my house to cool their nerves, but presently a craving comes over them for the magnificent, noisy, or vulgar entanglements without which they cannot live, and

they leave me, thinking I am a thin poor soul. Yes, what am I living for, Alphonse? After providing myself with a roof and bread, what am I living for? After living to keep myself alive, what next? My dear friend, the mechanism of our bodies runs smoothly; what purpose shall we serve with it? Faintly I perceive there is some God, some end in the midst of the darkness; but I understand none of His laws. My vision is feeble and indistinct; I blush, hesitate and flutter before a scarcely perceptible ray of light. I cannot determine whence it comes, whether from a glow-worm of my imagination or a distant star, or whether my blindness reduces a sun to a pale glimmer."

I got up and began pacing up and down the room. I was very excited. Barbier too, I saw, was feverish and perplexed. "I wish we had an Academician here to listen to our jumble of comments on the universe, to criticize our muddled idea of the stars, of geology, of paleology," I said. "This room is crowded with all the countries of the world, with ice ages and caves, with family life, with seas, with the night sky, and the extinct volcanoes of the moon. Moses and the philosophers, Newton, Einstein, Dosotiefsky, Beethoven, all the immortals sit round the walls, and in the midst you and I, a couple of phantoms, sit and ask each other what? Why? Whither? Are we Emperors of Sahara, trying to flood a desert above sea level with ocean waters? Are we drunken men who have lost the perception of gravity?"

Barbier laughed.

"You are a wild fool, Alphonse," he said.

"That exactly describes me," I cried; "but you were trembling yourself a moment ago. Who knows to-night may be the beginning of a new age.

"To-morrow the end of the world."



"Yes, certainly; to-morrow a scientist may discover atomic control, and shatter the mountains. Paul, you man of bread and cheese, let us go to your house. Greshkoff has let the universe into mine. Come, take me away in a cab, and when we are quietly in the shrine of dawn, guests of your phantom Helen, your Trojan Aurora, play to me. Play me minuets, gavottes, or the sonatas of Haydn; keep the illusion that your house is pure and of arcadian simplicity, that it is never an harbour for afternoon Romance or the storms of night-passion."

"That it never knew a human soul," smiled Barbier.

"Yes, if you like!" I cried. "Do anything with me you care. I am on fire. I feel suddenly," I said, as we went into the vestibule, "that I am on Mount Pisga. I see the future of mankind to evolve from the animal to the spiritual, to become through itself divine, and though I must remain of my time part beast, part god, that admixture man, I vow, Paul, that henceforth I will work to the highest perfection that I am able, to add to, to solidify, the 'Advance of Human Progress.' Ha, Paul, what of that? Keep the stars in mind and the green grass, and if the steam shovel of civilization digs your grave for you in that fragrant verdure, or heaps you on the refuse heap of its enemies under the dark of night, sing gaily, 'I fought and I lost, oh Stars! Bear witness when the world withers I was overwhelmed by force, not by fear.'"

On the threshold I stopped, and said, "And now, Paul, if you can love me whatever I may do, perceive if you can, behind my extravagance, frivolity, and wantonness, a soul that draws a bow at a long venture and does not hunt to-day's game in this entangled world."

"You have the fever of gods upon you," he said, smiling.

"If you like," I answered, "but I know the time has



come when we have exhausted the mine of cold reality. Houses, chairs, tables, education, and funerals, all those affairs we have dug out of the bowels of creation to honour the god of civilization with, have lost their sacred significance. What has too long been our master is about to be the servant of life. Life is the Thing, Paul. Life is to be the Thing. It has ceased, I tell you, to be the prelude which good men have found a little tedious to that dead arrangement, death."

"You old revivalist!" said Barbier, as we issued into the street.

"Maybe," I murmured; "but I tell you that I have a suspicion that if I were a prophet and not a sculptor I should expose an astounding truth to you to-night."

. . . . .

Girard, that is the rub. If I were a prophet! If we were all prophets! I think Nature knew her man when she wrapped his future in a dark cloud, away from his meddlesome mind.

Q/BIS RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

*November 30, 1921*

Farewell, Marguerite, and welcome! This is my last letter to you, for next week you come home.

Till then, God keep you! God amuse you! And if by any strange chance I am dead before next Tuesday, do not weep, be glad that I who love the green grass am laid under it and engrave upon my tombstone

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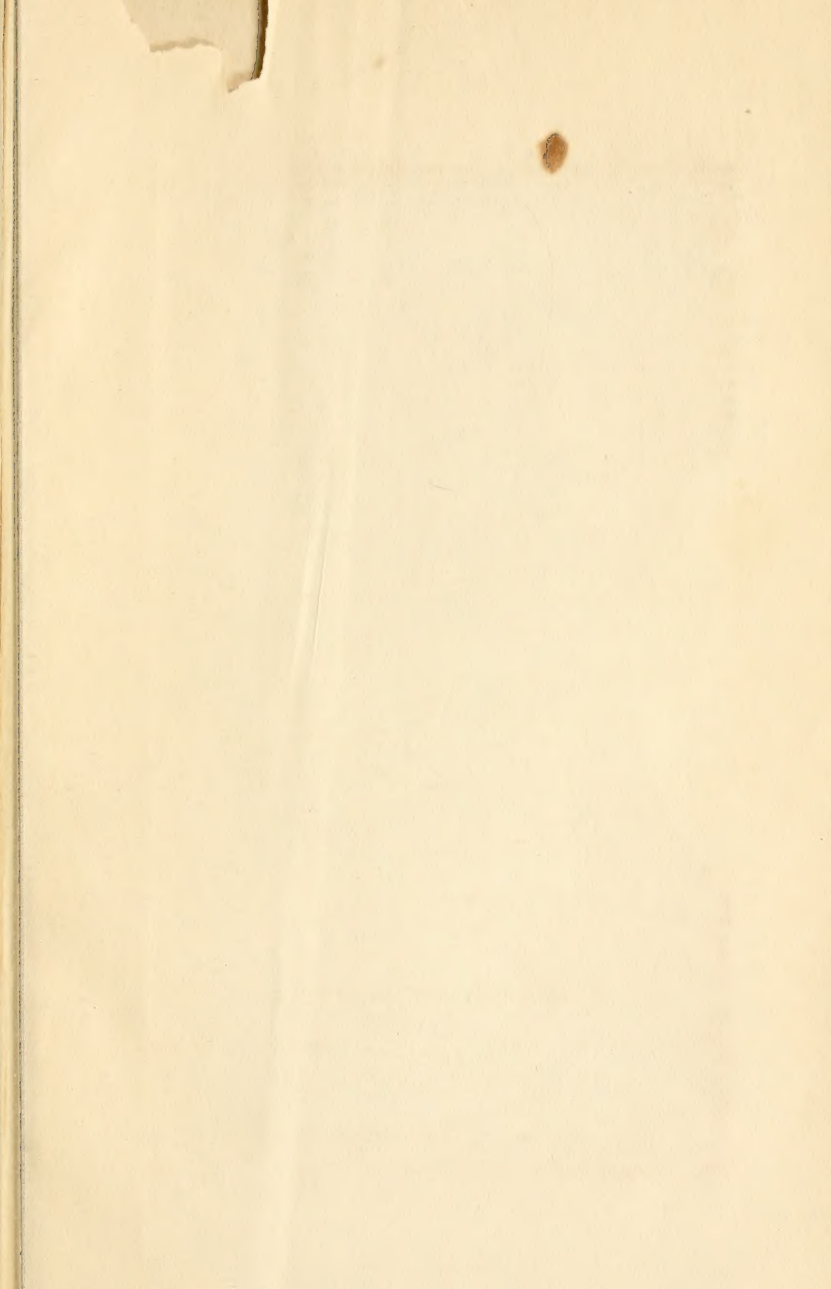
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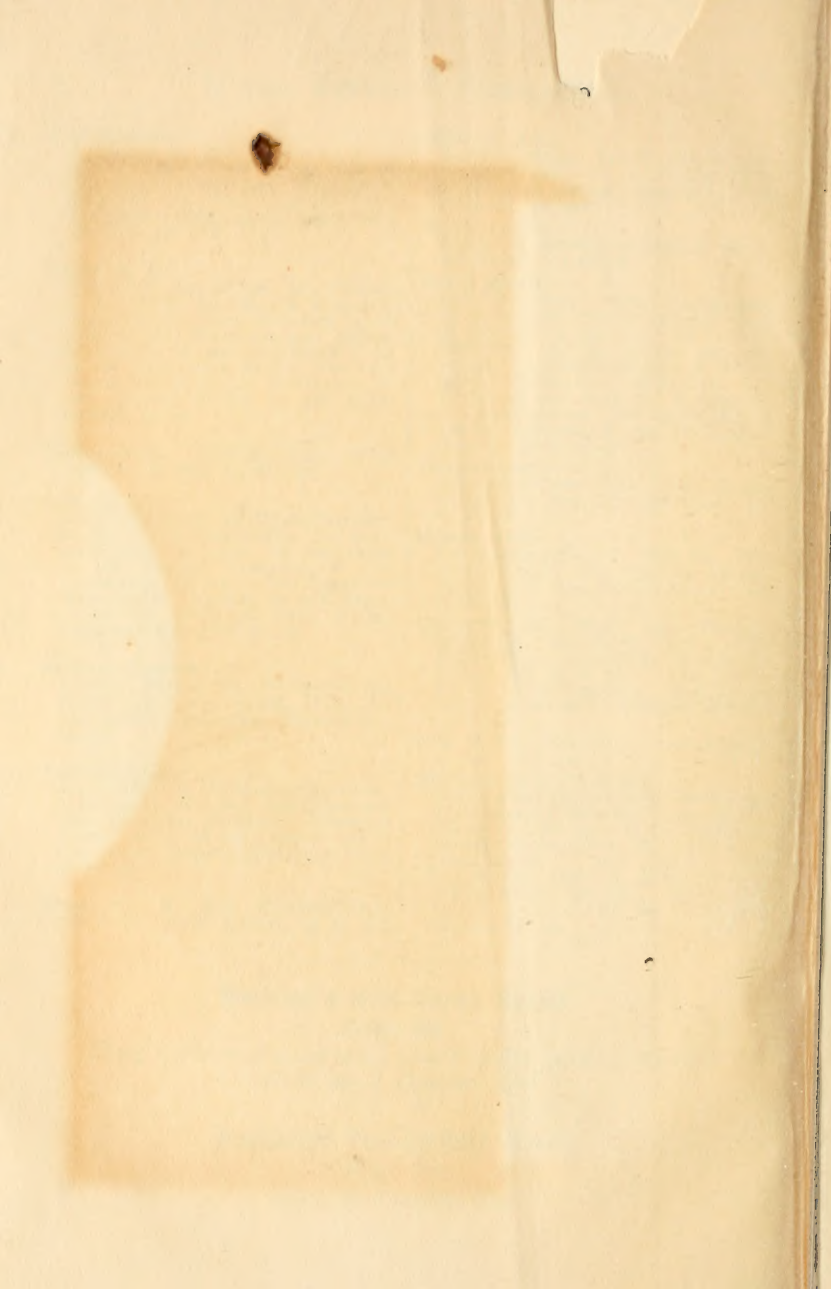
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